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REMARKS
ON THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE,

IN THE MANNER OF
THOSE OF VAUGELAS
ON THE
FRENCH;

BEING A DETECTION OF MANY IMPROPER EXPRESSIONS
USED IN CONVERSATION, AND OF MANY
OTHERS TO BE FOUND IN AUTHORS.

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M. G. Scott.

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P R E F A C E

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

IT seems a matter of wonder, considering how inclined we are to ape the French, that we have never yet had a production of this sort, they having several †; the first, as well as the most considerable of which, viz. The Remarks of Vaugelas, made its appearance about a hundred and ten years ago. I have not his book by me; nor did I ever see more than one copy of it, which copy I had in my possession for some time: but, according to what I can recollect, though there are many interesting, and some very curious, observations in him, some others are but trifling, as turning upon the spelling of a word. I remember likewise that I thought him too much prejudiced in favour of expressions used at the French court. That courtiers, whose being continually in the eye of their Prince, induces them to study elegance, have in general a more refined taste than other men, I am willing to believe. But to prefer an expression used at court to another of the same import used by all the rest of the nation, when the former is not intrinsically a better than the latter, but is perhaps a worse, is most certainly wrong. This, Vaugelas, notwithstanding, does throughout his book.

Among others of the French, who have made attempts of this nature, is the learned Menage. - But I do not find that his countrymen hold his performance in any great estimation: for, though he was a man of immense erudition, (beyond comparison greater than that of Vaugelas) he had little or nothing of genius, and but a poor and false taste. Bouhours, in his Remarks, makes very light of him.

It may possibly be expected that, being the first Englishman who has undertaken a work of this sort, I should give some account of myself, and let the public know what ground I have to think myself adequate to the task.

† At the time of my writing this Preface, I had neither seen the "Introduction to English Grammar," nor heard of it.

Here I am apprehensive of suffering through prejudice, the world having long entertained a notion that no man can be a critic in his mother-tongue, without being a master of the Latin and Greek. Now I confess that I am entirely ignorant of the Greek, and but indifferently skilled in the Latin, where I can construe nothing but what is easy. I quitted the school at fifteen, and am one of that large number, who, as I have observed in my Discourse to the King †, having been injudiciously instructed, and not understanding the Latin well enough, at their leaving school, to read an author with pleasure, entirely neglect the language from that time, and come to lose a part even of the imperfect knowledge they once had of it.

But why should this incapacitate a man for writing his mother-tongue with propriety? His not being well versed in the different languages, from which it is derived, renders him, indeed, unfit to compose a dictionary, as it unqualifies him for giving the etymology of words. But it by no means renders him incapable of a production of this kind, provided his natural taste be sufficiently good, and he have a knowledge of the rules of grammar and of the idioms of the tongue, as it is spoken by his countrymen in general, and an acquaintance with the best writers in it.

A man, who is fond of reading, naturally makes an acquaintance with the best writers, unless his taste be bad indeed; and he must be a great dunce, that does not easily attain to the knowledge of the rules of grammar. But whether my taste be so good as is requisite for what I have undertaken, as also whether I am sufficiently acquainted with the idioms of the tongue, must be left to be decided by the work itself. As, on the one hand, it would ill become *me* to affirm that I *have* these qualifications, so on the other, if by a nauseous affectation of modesty and humility I should declare or intimate that I believe I have them *not*, the question would naturally offer, *Why then have you given yourself this trouble?*

Why, indeed, does any man publish his thoughts, if he believes himself unable to produce what may be worth the attention of the Public? Without any mention therefore

† In the first edition of this book was a Discourse to his Majesty, which is here omitted.

of what I suppose my qualifications to be, I shall only say, that I firmly believe these observations are, in general, just, and may be of some use. What errors I have been guilty of I shall be glad to have pointed out to me: and, wherever I am convinced of a mistake, I will not fail to recant, should my book pass through a second edition. But, though I were even *infallible*, it were to be wished we had performances of this kind by different hands. Every just observation does not occur to any *one* mind: and the improprieties, that passed unnoticed in one of these productions, the reader might find detected in another. I could, indeed, myself easily have made double the number of observations I here give the Public: but I chose to see first how these would be received, not being willing to throw away too much time.

It will be easily discovered that I have paid no regard to authority. I have censured even our best penmen, where they have departed from what I conceive to be the idiom of the tongue, or where I have thought they violate grammar without necessity. To judge by the rule of *ipse dixit* is the way to perpetuate error.

Such as the work is, it is entirely my own, and no other person is accessory to whatever it contains liable to censure. Not being acquainted with any man of letters, I have consulted nobody.

It will undoubtedly be thought strange, when I declare that I have never yet seen the folio edition of Mr. Johnson's dictionary: but, knowing nobody that has it, I have never been able to borrow it; and I have myself no books; at least, not many more than what a church-going old woman may be supposed to have of devotional ones upon her mantle-piece: for, having always had a narrow income, it has not been in my power to make a collection without straitening myself. Nor did I ever see even the Abridgment of this Dictionary till a few days ago, when, observing it inserted in the catalogue of a Circulating Library, where I subscribe, I sent for it.

The reader will perceive in the 104th Remark, that I take it for granted the *s*, which we use at the end of our genitives, where they are not preceded by the preposition *of*, is a contraction of *his*: and I speak of the barbarism there is in such expressions as these—*That woman's estate*
—*those*

—those men's properties—which I suppose to be the contractions of *that woman her estate*,—those men his properties.

I perceive, by the grammar Mr. Johnson has prefixed to this Abridgment, that he is of opinion here is no contraction; that *woman's* is one word only, and not *two*: and, consequently, that the apostrophe was originally improper. His argument hereupon staggers me, I own, but does not convince me.

“These genitives,” says he, “are always written with a mark of elision, according to a long-received opinion that the *s* is a contraction of *his*, as *The soldier's valour* for *the soldier his valour*. But this cannot be the true original, because *'s* is put to female nouns, as *woman's beauty*, *the virgin's delicacy*; and collective nouns, as *women's passions*, *the rabble's insolence*, *the multitude's folly*. In all these cases it is apparent that *his* cannot be understood.”

Here I am afraid Mr. Johnson pays the world an undeserved compliment. I apprehend that, on the contrary, nothing of this sort can be too preposterous for men to be guilty of. Let us consider an expression or two in the French tongue. *Il ne s'en est gueres falu* signifies *It wanted but little of it*. Yet these words, if we attend to the sense of each of them separately, have no meaning. *Failli*, which is the participle of *faillir*, *to be deficient*, was undoubtedly the word originally used; whereas *fa lu* is the participle of *fa lair*, *to be low*. Notwithstanding this, *fa lu* is here used by the whole French nation, learned and ignorant. *Failli* would sound uncouth; and a man to talk easy French, must talk nonsense.

Again. *Au prix de* signifies *in comparison with*. But, without all doubt, *auprès de*, literally *near to*, was the original expression. For *near to*, to signify *in comparison with*, is a natural way of speaking, a comparison of two objects being best made when they are placed *near to* each other, or side by side; whereas *to the price of*, and *at the price of*, which are the literal meanings of *au prix de*, are nothing at all to the purpose. Yet is this expression of *au prix de* become by far the most common of the two; *auprès de*, in the signification of *in comparison with*, being almost confined to oratory and poetry.

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The reader may likewise see what I have taken notice of in Remark 37.

From these, and other examples that might be brought, it is plain that the absurdity of an expression, as used in a certain sense, is no proof at all that it has not been, or may not be, universally received in that sense.

But perhaps it may not be difficult to give a reason why this using the adjective *his* with female, or with plural nouns, though it may appear so very preposterous now, was originally not at all so. For we are to consider that languages are not formed at once. We may reasonably suppose them to be at first little, if any thing, better than the sounds, which the most sagacious brute animals make to each other. It is by degrees only that distinctions are made: wherefore it appears highly probable that in the crude infancy of most, if not of all the languages that are or have been, the different ideas, which we English express by the words *he*, *she*, *it*, and *they*, were expressed by one and the same word. The French, even at this day, when their language is become so copious and so refined, have no neuter pronoun; and to express the *it* of the English, they use either *il* or *elle*, which words signify *he* and *she*. On the other hand, they make a distinction which we do not make: for we use the word *they* both for the *ils* and for the *elles* of the French, making it masculine and feminine, as well as neuter.

Now, if our ancestors, in the infancy of the language, had but one word for the substantives *he*, *she* and *they*, it follows almost of course that they had likewise but one for the adjectives *his*, *her* and *their*. Consequently, if they had the sort of expression we now use, and, instead of saying *the house of the man*, said *the man's house*, as a contraction of *the man his house*, there was no impropriety in saying *the woman's house* and *the men's houses*, as contractions of *the woman his house* and *the men his houses*: and we may suppose that afterwards, when the words *her* and *their* were invented, the *r*, the last letter of these two words, being less pliant and ductile, and not joining so kindly with the ends of words in general as does the *s*, this last letter continued still to be used where it was now become improper.

I am not unapprized that, in answer hereto, I may be told that I seem to beg a question, and that I go upon
the

the supposition that our ancestors did really use this way of speaking, *that man his house*, for *the house of that man*; "which supposition," it will be added, "is unreasonable, such a way of speaking being ungrammatical and unnatural. No conclusion can therefore be drawn from thence in favour of any propriety there once may have been in placing this adjective *his* after female, collective, or plural nouns." But to this I should reply that, though such a way of speaking be ungrammatical, and may therefore to grammarians appear at first view unnatural, it is a *natural*, a *very natural* way of speaking among an ignorant people, whose language is not yet brought into any form, and who may be supposed to express their thoughts to each other much in the same manner in which we talk to babies: and it is not to be imagined that, in improving the English language, our later ancestors, the more immediate descendents of our remote forefathers, have banished *all* the rude idioms it contained.

The French to this day have a way of speaking, which is something similar. Instead of saying *Is your father at home?*—*Is that affair ended?* they say, *Your father, is he at home?*—*That affair, is it ended?* where *father* and *affair* are nominatives without any verb. Nay, we ourselves likewise, where we would speak with an emphasis, and be particularly intelligible, often use expressions of the same turn. A counsellor, in pleading, instead of *That man did so and so*, would not scruple to say, *That man he did so and so*, and, in questioning a witness, instead of *Is the prisoner at the bar the very man?* *The prisoner at the bar, is he the very man?*

Mr. Johnson proceeds thus. "We say likewise *the foundation's strength, the diamond's lustre, the winter's severity*. But in these cases *his* may be understood, *he* and *his* having been formerly applied to neuters, in the place now supplied by *it* and *its*.

This seems to favour my above conjecture, that *he* and *his* were originally applied likewise to females: of which if we have no example in any of the writings of our ancestors, the reason may be that the word *she* was invented long before *it*, and at a time too remote for any of their then writings to have come down to us. What makes it highly probable that, supposing the word *he* to have been originally

originally masculine, feminine and neuter, *she* is the senior of *it*, is that, there being a far greater likeness between males and females, who are capable of the same actions, and liable to the same accidents, with each other, than between males and neuters, the word *he* was much more frequently misunderstood, when spoken of a male or of a female, than when spoken of any neuter object; and, consequently, a feminine pronoun became so much the more necessary.

So far then, in my apprehension, there seems to be no ground to believe or to suspect that this *s* is not a contraction of the word *his*. But Mr. Johnson adds as follows:

“ This termination of the noun seems to constitute a real genitive, indicating possession. It is derived to us from those who declined *a smith,* *of a smith,* *smiths*; and so in two others of their seven declensions.”

Here is indeed, to all appearance, an objection to the common opinion; but how far it militates I cannot judge, knowing nothing of the language from whence the three words are taken, which, in the passage just quoted, are inserted where I have left blank spaces. Nor do I know *all* the letters, nor even what the language is. But I suppose it to be the Saxon. I perceive, however, that the plural number, and the genitive of the singular, end with the same letter, which I suppose to be an *s*. This, as I said before, *flatters*, if it does not absolutely *convince* me. But then I should be glad to know whether that language has the word *his* in the same signification that it bears in ours, or any other monosyllable ending with an *s*, and that has no other consonant. If so, the *s* at the end of the genitive, in some of the declensions of that language, may not improbably be a contraction of such word, and therefore we have still the same reason as before to consider that letter at the end of the English genitive as a contraction of *his*†.

Mr. Johnson adds “ It is a further confirmation of this opinion, that in the old poets both the genitive and the

† Since the time of my writing this, I have learnt that the word *his* is really the same signification in the Saxon as in the English.

“ plural

“ plural were longer by a syllable than the original word.
 “ *Knitis* for *knight's* in Chaucer; *leavis* for *leaves* in
 “ Spenfer.”

If plurals and genitives thus lengthened are to be found only in poets, this argument does not seem to be of any great weight, considering the liberties poets are apt to take, either to soften or to animate their style.

Upon the whole, I know not well what to think of the matter, but am rather inclined to take it still in the light that I have hitherto done. Nor do I see why the notion that a certain letter, often occurring at the end of words, is a contraction of another word, should become so universal if it were not really so.

I shall only add that it is some mortification to me not to be entirely of the same opinion with Mr. Johnson, whom I suppose to be a man of as good sense as any in the kingdom, and whose abilities I honour †.

In the beginning of the discourse to his Majesty, I have said that our writers abound with incorrectnesses and barbarisms; for which I there suppose the establishment of an academy of Belles Lettres might in a great measure be a cure. I make no doubt that the academy of Paris has contributed not a little to the refining the French tongue, there being an amazing difference between the French of an hundred and ten years ago, and that of forty years before. The former is quite modern, the other an antiquated language. It was, I think, about the year 1630 that academy was instituted. The members of it have not been, however, quite so active as they ought in their endeavours to abolish barbarous expressions. Can we suppose that if all who have ever belonged to that academy had constantly, both in speaking and writing, rejected the absurd phrases of *est gueres falu*, and *au prix de*, mentioned above, and persisted in pronouncing and writing *failli* and *auprès de*, can we suppose, I say, (especially so many of these academicians being celebrated authors) that these last expressions would not long before now have become univer-

† Upon seeing what the Author of the Introduction to English Grammar says hereupon, I have been inclined to alter my opinion. I would not, however, cancel the arguments I have used in this preface, because I think them plausible.

fal? *One* man alone, who opposes a whole nation, by persisting in what is in itself ever so right, for the most part makes himself ridiculous. But such a respectable body as this would have a great weight. The members would keep one another in countenance; and the world, conscious of their having reason on their side, and being at the same time awed by their authority, would not fail to concur with them and to follow their example. Who can imagine that the Latin tongue would have so degenerated as it did between the time of Cicero and that of Seneca, had there been in Rome a numerous society of men of parts and learning, who had set themselves as a barrier against the admission of unnatural or ill-sounding expressions, and had endeavoured not only to maintain, but even to improve, the purity and elegance of style of the Augustan age?

If therefore an academy of Belles Lettres should ever be formed in London, it were to be wished that the members, among whom we must suppose will of course be the finest writers of the age, would, whenever they concur in opinion that an anomalous expression has nothing of that unaccountable pleasingness which irregular phrases sometimes have, but, on the contrary, an awkward absurdity that will always stare us in the face, that they would, I say, come to a resolution among themselves never to make use of such expression. Should the language, at the same time, seem to want a more elegant one to convey the sentiment, who so fit for the inventing it as these people, a part of whose very *trade* is elegance and propriety of diction? The rest of the nation, according to what I said before, would not fail to follow them, sooner or later, in the use of the one, and disuse of the other.

This, and the inventing single words of a pleasing sound, to express ideas, for which we have no elegant phrases, seem to be the most that can be done for the improving an old and settled language: for, as to the new-moulding it, and altering its general form, it is a thing impossible.

Should a certain number of gentlemen of our two universities be admitted members of this academy, which, as I have said in my Discourse to the King, seems to be no more than what good-manners would require, they

might be little less useful than if they resided *here*, a correspondence being so easily kept up between *them* and the members living in London. They might presently give their several opinions upon any thing started here, and, in their turn, communicate whatever had been first suggested among themselves.

Were such an academy really subsisting, and (what has been often talked of) a new theatre erected in London, it would be a satisfaction, as I apprehend, to all persons of taste to have that theatre in some degree under the direction of the members of this academy. If players were obliged to hearken to the admonitions of men so judicious as we are to suppose most of these members would be, they would not run riot, and be guilty of the strange absurdities they often are. I have given in my Remarks an instance or two of the gross ignorance of some of them in their making use of improper words. These perhaps are not actors of the highest reputation. But even the most eminent among them, and such as the world is complaisant enough to call *first-rate performers*, will sometimes turn all sense topsy-turvy by an injudicious delivery. Othello says to Iago,

'Tis yet to know (which, when I know that boasting is an honour, I shall promulgate) I fetch my life and being from men of royal siege.

Can any thing be more intelligible than this? One would imagine every person, not destitute of understanding, must see, at first sight, that these words, placed in their natural order, and without any attempt at a pomp of diction, stand thus, *'Tis yet to know I fetch my life and being from men of royal siege; which I shall promulgate, when I know that boasting is an honour.* And yet the just and judicious Quin, as he was often called, pronounced this, for many years before his retreat, as though the words *I shall promulgate* were not included in the parenthesis, but belonged to *I fetch my life and being.* For instance,

'Tis yet to know, (which, when I know that boasting is an honour) I shall promulgate I fetch my life and being from men of royal siege: which is as much as to say, 'Tis yet to know I shall promulgate that I fetch my life and being from men of royal siege: which, when I know that boasting is an honour,

honour, and is as complete nonsense as it is possible to utter †.

Lady Brute, after some altercation with her husband, says to him, *What is the reason that you use me as you do of late? It once was otherwise. You married me for love.* Mrs. Pritchard used, in pronouncing these last words, to lay the emphasis upon *me* and *love*—*you married ME for LOVE*.—Herein she quite altered Lady Brute's sense. She should have laid them upon *married* and *love*. By her laying an emphasis upon *ME*, she seemed to make a comparison between his motive for marrying *her*, and his motive for marrying *some former wife*; which is wrong. Lady Brute ought to pronounce these words in a manner, that expresses the difference between his *now* treatment of her, and his treatment of her *at the time he married her*. Sir John, indeed, in his reply, ought to put an emphasis upon *me*. He makes answer *And you me for money*. Here ought to be three emphases, one upon *you*, another upon *me*, and the third upon *money*: for *his YOU* stands opposed to *her YOU*, *his ME* to *her ME*, and *his MONEY* to *her LOVE*.

In the play of *Measure for Measure*, Angelo, viceroy of the Duke of Vienna during the feigned absence of this Duke, imprisons Claudio, a young gentleman, and threatens him with death; but signifies to Isabella, sister of Claudio, that, if she will yield herself up to his embraces, he will give her brother both his life and liberty. Isabella, expressing to Claudio her indignation at his proposal, says

Oh, were it but my life, I'd throw it down for your deliverance as frankly as a pin.

Mrs. Cibber, in pronouncing this, always laid a strong emphasis upon *my*, and sunk her voice upon *life*; by which she destroyed the sense of what she said. The emphasis ought to be laid not upon *my*, but upon *life*: for

† Barry, at his first appearance in London, pronounced these words in the same manner as Quin; whom, without doubt, he copied. But, on my sending him an anonymous letter, and shewing him the absurdity of such pronunciation, he immediately delivered them otherwise. He never wrote to Quin, because, from what I had heard of the man, I judged him too opinionated to pay any regard to the admonition.

the meaning is *I would willingly give my LIFE to save you, but cannot consent to give up my HONOUR.*

Now, if *admired* actors are capable of misapprehending passages so very plain and intelligible, what room for censure must we suppose there is in the performance of their inferiors! And is it right to suffer these people thus to mangle the drama? A theatre should be considered in the light of a public school. Nothing should be delivered there, but with the utmost propriety and precision; and there ought to be appointed a certain number of men of approved parts and judgment, authorised to take cognizance of the errors of these actors, and to oblige them to correct themselves. I am as sensible as any man can be of the real merit of Garrick: his talents, both for Comedy and Tragedy, are amazing.—In many scenes of the latter he is even transporting; but to admire the *whole* of his performance is to be stark blind. Among other circumstances, the stage would have no little obligation to him for having banished the stiff manner in which prologues were formerly delivered, if what he has introduced in the room of it were not likewise censurable. His acting the sense of every word has certainly, as Theophilus Cibber has already observed, too much of the Pantomime, and is very unnatural in every character, but that of a buffoon. But it is no uncommon thing for people to become unnatural by over-acting nature. Gesture ought to assist and support speech, but not to bear an equal part with it.

How often, and yet to how little purpose, has Garrick been reproved for making a full stop in the middle and at the end of lines in tragedy, whether there be any stop in the sense or not: by which he so frequently makes nonsense of what he utters!

I could never admire him, as many people have always done, in Ranger and Benedic. By a too great desire of appearing natural and easy, he throws a lowness into both of these characters; and he makes the former, which is in itself a very insignificant one, quite nauseous and contemptible.

In Archer he is in some measure guilty of the same fault; and he does not make this character by far so elegant a one as the poet intended it. In some of the
scenes

scenes too he plays the buffoon. He seems to make a jest of Aimwell in his manner of lighting him to his chamber; which circumstance might be sufficient to give the inn-keeper (for Boniface is present) a suspicion that they are not really master and servant. Where he breaks in upon Lady Bountiful, Mrs. Sullen and Dorinda, and informs them of his master's sudden illness, instead of behaving so as to make the old lady believe the illness real, which it is his business to do, he plays the antic in such a manner that she must be an old woman indeed not to suspect it feigned.

In the part of Bayes, in which he so highly delights the shilling-gallery, he is too much the Merry-Andrew, and exhibits little or nothing of the delicate absurdity of the character, excepting in the first act, where he performs admirably well.

An actor often wrongly concludes, from his having made an audience laugh, that he has given that audience pleasure. Ignorant people (and of such consists the bulk of all large assemblies not composed of selected persons) will frequently laugh, where they see preposterous actions or hear preposterous thoughts, though they feel no pleasure at all: but, perceiving there is a jest intended, and not knowing but there may really be a jest in the case, they laugh, for fear of having their understanding called in question. I am convinced that Garrick would please more, *much* more, than he now does, if he made the character of Archer more elegant, and did not play the buffoon in any one scene, though perhaps nobody would laugh, or, to speak more properly, nobody would *affect* to laugh. Let any man of sense read the Stratagem, and he will find nothing to laugh at in what comes from Archer, though the whole of what he says excites cheerfulness, and not a few of his speeches may raise a smile. As to the character of Bayes, it is what not every one is capable of entering into; and, if the Rehearsal were played in a just manner, and not made a Bartlemy-fair entertainment, the mob of the audience would think it sad stuff. This comedy is spoilt, to all people of taste, not only by Bayes's acting the Merry-Andrew, but by the wrong conception of those who perform the parts of the players. The author intended these players as men of tolerable understanding, and ca-

pable of seeing the absurdity of Bayes ; which circumstance renders the comedy so much the more entertaining : whereas the people, who play these parts, seem to vie with Bayes in blundering and wrong-headedness ; and, together with *him*, they make such a hotch-potch of nonsense that the true humour of the play is entirely destroyed.

I know not whether it was Garrick or Mrs. Woffington, that was the beginner of a strangely improper and very priggish way of going off the stage at the conclusion of a scene ; but they were both early in it, and set a bad example to the rest of the players, many of whom have been injudicious enough to imitate them. An actor ought to maintain his theatrical character till he is entirely out of sight of the audience. Garrick ought not to be Garrick till the scenes hide him. Instead of this, Mrs. Woffington and he took it into their heads long ago, how serious soever the part were that they were playing, to trip off the stage with a bridled head and an affected alertness. If one had a mind to be ill-natured, one might suppose this was in order to give the spectators an idea of the liveliness of their private character. Mrs. Cibber was sometimes guilty of the same fault ; but Mrs. Pritchard never was.

It is now many years ago that Garrick introduced among his actors (for they are too implicit to suppose any thing can be wrong which they see him do) another strange, and, in my opinion, very uncouth habit, viz. the raising the two heels alternately, so as to have continually either the one or the other of the feet resting upon its fore-part. I have some suspicion that he was advised to this by some not-rightly-conceiving painter or sculptor. It is true that to stand equally upon the two legs is ungraceful. This is the posture of old and of weakly people : those who are young and strong, seldom stand in that manner, unless they are remarkably awkward. Where we thus rest chiefly upon one leg, the knee of the other side of the body becomes, of course, a little bent ; and, if we raise the heel of that side from off the ground, it becomes still more bent. Now this waving position of the thigh, leg, and foot has its beauty ; and, at the same time, the thus resting chiefly on one leg causes something of that waving in the whole person. It is not without reason that Hogarth in his *Analysis*

lysis calls the somewhat-curving line *the line of beauty*: for straight lines in the shape of the bodies of animals and in their attitudes are disagreeable. Accordingly, the ancient sculptors, whose ideas of beauty appear to have been so just, have taken care to avoid these straight lines. I cannot help thinking, however, that herein they have sometimes departed a little from nature, and that, in contriving for their figures this waving attitude, they have here and there fallen into an excess; witness, among the rest, (I here speak to those only who have some knowledge of the antique statues) him of the two brothers, Castor and Pollux, whose hand is placed upon the other's shoulder. Perhaps too the fine figure of Antinous may be a little faulty in this respect. As for that master-piece, Laocoon and his two sons, the extreme bodily pain, they are supposed to be in, is a sufficient plea for the violence of their contortions. But, if the ancient sculptors have now and then made the attitudes of their figures somewhat more waving than probability will warrant, modern sculptors and painters have been guilty of the same fault in at least as great a degree. As to the habit of the Drury-Lane actors mentioned above, and which I have said I suspect to have been at first owing to the advice of some painter or sculptor, it is a very awkward one. To take care not to stand equally upon the two legs, unless it be in the character of an old man or woman, is indeed right; but the raising the heels alternately, and resting for just so many seconds chiefly upon one leg, and then falling into the counter-position for the same space of time, is stiff and unnatural, and has a disagreeable air of studiedness. There are many different positions in which the legs may be placed; and here, as in all the rest of his deportment, an actor ought to avoid too much sameness.

Before I conclude upon this article, let me observe that, in standing, the heel ought seldom to be raised, and never for any length of time. To keep it so raised is unnatural; because to stand for any time with one of the legs bearing so great a part of the weight of the body, as it must then bear, is very painful. It is further to be observed that the foot, of which the heel is thus raised, ought to be drawn back, and never to advance farther than, nor even equally with, the other foot, these two positions

tions being unnatural and ungraceful. Mossop was frequently guilty of this, and has often put me in mind of a horse advancing one of his fore-legs, and resting it lightly upon his toe; which the poor animal does, to relieve a tender foot. When I say that the heel ought never to continue raised for any length of time, I mean, unless the body be partly sustained by something upon which the person leans; for, in this case, the chiefly-supporting leg bears so much the less weight. There is a fine antique statue of a fawn leaning, and playing upon a flute, with one foot thrown over the other, and resting upon its fore-part, which makes a very pleasing posture, and gives the figure a striking air of ease and naturalness.

Having taken the liberty thus publicly to censure this celebrated actor, whom, upon the whole, I very greatly admire, it seems but just that I should, at the same time, publicly confess myself under an obligation to him, he having, during the two seasons immediately preceding the time of his going abroad, granted me the liberty of his house. He does not know me otherwise than by name; but, being apprized that I was a great lover of theatrical entertainments, and suspecting, without doubt, that I could ill afford money for pleasure, he caused it to be signified to me that I might send to him for orders for any part of the house whenever I pleased.

This obligation was the chief cause of my committing to the flames, soon after, a great number of Remarks that I had been making for four or five years upon the several performances of our players; and which I had intended to digest, and to publish. But I was more scrupulous then than I have shewn myself now, and was unwilling to criticise a man to whom I stood indebted. I have heartily repented of it since; for either I flatter myself, or I should have made many observations that would have been of some use; a thing of which I am convinced the author of the *Rosciad* was utterly incapable. This was a superficial fellow, who, being puffed up by the injudicious applauses of the public, became at length the most insolent and insufferable of all coxcombs. His understanding was trifling; he had a small share of wit, and a middling talent for verification. What is to be thought of the judgment of a man who makes a bare mention of that excellent comedian

dian Yates, (and that rather with an appearance of disesteem than otherwise,) and is, at the same time, an admirer of the noisy, unmeaning Blakes? But this is not to be wondered at in a critic, who, while he despises Ma-son, looks upon Lloyd as a poet and a genius; Lloyd, whose works may not be improperly called *A chymical Extract of Insipidity—the very Quintessence of Nothingness.*

Had I ever reduced into form, and published the Remarks I have just mentioned, I should have been much more sparing of my encomiums upon several admired performers (among others, upon Quin, Mrs. Cibber, and Mrs. Woffington) than the world in general has been. As to the last of these three, though she was undeniably capital in some very few characters, particularly in Clarissa in the Confederacy, and in Lady Dainty, I looked upon her as one of the falsest and most unnatural actresses I had ever seen.

Lord Chief Justice

Chinborough

Late Master of the Rolls

A. Jackson

A. S. Harrow.

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P R E F A C E

TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

THE Remarks were first published in 1770. That edition had a tolerable sale; and I know not why I have so long deferred the giving a second. I have now almost doubled the number of Remarks, and both hope and believe my book will be of some use.

I here declare, as in the Preface to the first edition, that the performance is entirely my own. I have had no assistance from any friend; nor have I borrowed from any work. I even did not know, till the late Dr. Salter shewed me the Introduction to the English Grammar, that any thing of the kind had ever appeared among us. I then perceived that some (*not many*) of the observations I had made, had been already made by the author of that work. On the other hand, there are observations in a subsequent edition of the Introduction, which I had made in my first edition. But I have no suspicion that any of those observations were borrowed from *me*. Whoever will give himself the trouble to compare the two books will, indeed, be inclined to wonder that they do not oftener detect the same correctnesses than they actually do.

My book was first taken notice of by the Critical Reviewers, who spoke in commendation of it.

The Monthly Reviewers commented largely upon it in their Review for August, 1771, and quoted many Remarks, which they seemed to approve; but afterwards excepted to certain expressions which I had made use of. Some of these strictures are, I confess, just; but the greater part, if I have any judgment, captious and absurd.

"He uses," say they, "the barbarous phrase *some few*."

Some few is by no means a barbarous phrase. The author of the Introduction to English Grammar, a far better judge of style than these Reviewers, uses it not infrequently.

Some few is in many places (where *a few* would be rapid) the only phrase that can be used with any grace.

As

As also is another expression which displeases them; and without any just reason. The expression is a good one, and unexceptionable.

“*'Tis*,” say they, “is a barbarous contraction of *it is*.”

It may be so in general; but there are many places, where *'tis* is much better than *it is*, and where *it is* would be flat. *'Twas I that kill'd her*, says Othello. How poor and spiritless would be *it was I*! Where we are supposed to speak hastily and with passion, the contraction is necessary, and the *it* would be unnatural.

About half a score more of their strictures appear to me as injudicious as these; but to cite them all would take me up too much time, and would be no entertainment to the reader.

REMARKS

REMARKS

ON THE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

I. OPPOSITE.

THE word *opposite* is frequently used as a preposition, to signify *over-against*.

EXAMPLES.

He lives opposite the Exchange: those two men live opposite each other: Whitehall is opposite the Horse-Guards. This is not good English.—It is necessary to add to *opposite* the word *to*.—*He lives opposite to the Exchange.—Those two men live opposite to each other.—Whitehall is opposite to the Horse-Guards.*

II. WRITE.

THIS word is often used (especially by people in trade) with a dative case following it, without the preposition *to* prefixed to that dative, even though there be no accusative after it.

EXAMPLES.

He is gone into the country, and has promised to write me often.—They are so punctual in their correspondence that they write each other every week.—I won't fail to write you soon. This is very barbarous expression. The preposition is absolutely necessary.

EXAMPLES.

He is gone into the country, and has promised to write to me often.—They are so punctual in their correspondence that they write to each other every week.—I will not fail to write to you soon.

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REMARKS ON THE

Indeed, where an accusative case follows the dative, the preposition becomes unnecessary, and is seldom used. For instance; *he writes me word that the affair is finished.—We write each other very long letters.—I have written her a long account of that transaction.*

Nor is the preposition absolutely necessary, where the accusative of the relative pronoun *which* or *that* is supposed, without being expressed.

EXAMPLES.

The letter I wrote him never came to hand.—The news I shall write her to-night will please her greatly.—Here the pronoun relative which, or that, is supposed: for the sense is, the letter that (or which) I wrote him, never came to hand.—The news, that (or which) I shall write her to-night, will please her greatly.

III. Omission of the Nominative of the relative Pronouns WHO, THAT and WHICH.

THE nominative of the relative pronouns *who*, *that* and *which*, is frequently omitted by bad writers, (and sometimes, though rarely, even by good ones) and left to be supposed. Instead, for instance, of saying, *the man, who lived there lately, is removed.—The article, that was inserted in yesterday's paper, is not true.—The wine, which pleases me best, is claret; they would say, the man, lived there lately, is removed.—The article, was inserted in yesterday's paper, is not true.—The wine, pleases me best, is claret.—This is very bad expression, and renders the sentence obscure.*

There are, however, in Shakespeare, and other great writers, some few instances, where the omission adds to the spirit of the sentence, without causing any obscurity. It may likewise now and then be borne with in common conversation. Yet in general it has a bad effect in conversation, and a still much worse in writing.

IV. AS FOLLOW used for AS FOLLOWS.

SOME good writers (among others, Addison) express themselves in this manner, *The articles were as follow.—The circumstances of the affair are as follow.—The conditions of the agreement are as follow.*

I conceive

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I conceive this expression to be wrong, and that *as follows* ought to be here used, and not *as follow*. What deceives these writers is that the preceding substantive is in the plural number. But this substantive is by no means a nominative case to *follow* or *follows*. If the verb *follow*, or *follows*, have any nominative, it is the pronoun *it*, which is supposed, and is here unrelative, as in many other cases: in these, for instance; *It is very hot weather.*—*It is cold.*

The sense then is, *The articles were as it here follows.*—*The circumstances of the affair are as it here follows.*—*The conditions of the agreement are as it here follows.* Consequently *follows* ought to be used, and not *follow*. Indeed, if the word *such* preceded the *as*, *follow* would be right, and not *follows*; because *such as* would be equivalent to *these which*.

V. HIT *for* THROW.

THE word *hit* is commonly used in Oxfordshire, and some of the adjacent counties, even by people of good education, to signify *to*, *throw* or *fling*. It is necessary to inform them that *to hit* signifies *to strike*, and not to *to* or *throw*.

VI. *The words AGO and SINCE.*

THESE two words are not to be used together. *It is not above two months ago since he left the university.—It is three years ago since his father died.—These expressions do not make sense; the word since being equivalent to ago that.*

The proper expressions are, *It is not above two months ago that he left the university.*—*It is not above two months since he left the university.*—*It is three years ago that his father died.*—*It is three years since his father died.*

VII. CHAY.

THIS word is used by great numbers of people to signify *chaise*. What deceives them is that, the letter *s* in the word *chaise* being the last letter that is pronounced, they take the word to be in the plural number; consequently, they imagine that the singular number must be *chay*. But

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REMARKS ON THE

chaise is singular, and the plural is *chaises*.—*He keeps a chaise*.—*He keeps two chaises*.—These are the proper expressions. As to *chay*, there is no such word.

VIII. WENT.

THE word *went* is not to be used with *have*, *had* or *having*.—*I should have went*.—*If I had went*.—*Having went*. This is bad English.

The proper word is *gone*.—*I should have gone*.—*If I had gone*.—*Having gone*.

IX. DIFFERENT TO.

DIFFERENT TO is an expression often used by good writers: yet I cannot help thinking it exceptionable.—*This is different to that*.—*They are different to each other*.—These expressions seem hardly to make sense. Is not the word *from* here more natural than *to*? and does it not make better sense? For instance; *This is different from that*.—*They are different from each other*. We do not use the word *to* with the verb; nor do I see why we should use it with the adjective. If any one should say, *This differs to that*—*they differ to each other*, the impropriety of the expression would be glaring, and would shock every hearer. I know that custom often reconciles improprieties of this sort; yet there are some cases, where it never reconciles them entirely: and this appears to me to be one. I would therefore give my vote for *different from*, and would banish the expression of *different to*.

X. INGENUITY.

IT is a considerable blemish in our language that the word *ingenuity* has two senses; for hereby it often becomes unintelligible. If I hear it said simply that such an one is a man of great ingenuity, how is it possible I should know the meaning of the expression? It may signify either that he is *ingenious*, or that he is *ingenuous*. We have, it is true, many words in English (as there are many in other languages) that have each of them more than one meaning; but this seldom occasions any obscurity, because the subject spoken of commonly determines the sense. With regard to the word *ingenuity*, it is otherwise; it being made use of

ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

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of to signify two excellent mental qualities, *ability* and *candour*, one is sometimes at a loss to know in which of the two senses it is to be taken. It was certainly very ill judged, when the word *ingenuity* was received into the English language, to give it the signification of *ability*. It ought, in conformity to its etymology, to imply only *candour*. The substantive of the word *ingenious* ought to be *ingeniety*, and not *ingenuity*, which ought to be the substantive only of *ingenuous*. This word *ingeniety* (with the accent upon the syllable *ni*) would be both useful and ornamental in our tongue.

I have known some persons, who, to avoid ambiguity, have made use of the word *ingeniousness*. This is not a word much authorised by custom: yet, as the sense of it cannot be mistaken, I would not condemn any one that should employ it.

XI. ANY. NONE.

IN Lancashire, Cheshire, and some other north-west counties, the words *any* and *none* are used adverbially even by persons of distinction; the first to signify *at all*, the other *none at all*.

Is she recovered from her illness any? Would one of these gentry say, meaning *is she at all (or in any degree) recovered?*—No, says another, *she is recovered none*.—Surely there cannot be a greater violation of grammar and common sense. It is necessary to inform these north-western people of fashion that *any* and *none* have not the significations they give them; that they are adjectives, and are never to be used adverbially.

XII. Demean.

THIS word is used by all the lower people, as well as by great numbers of their betters, to signify *debase* or *lessen*. It is also found in the same sense in bad writers. *Richardson* often presents his readers with it in his emetic history of *Pamela*. Nay, if I mistake not, I have met with it once or twice in *Swift*; and I think it likewise once occurs in my Lord *Bolingbroke's* "*Oldcastle's Remarks upon English History*." If these two writers have really employed the

word in that sense, it must undoubtedly have been through oversight. They could never be ignorant that *to demean* signifies *to behave, to comport*; and not *to debase or lessen*.

What causes the mistake in so many persons is the syllable *mean*. The word *mean* signifying *low and contemptible*; and the word *meanness, lowness*; they imagine from thence that *to demean* must signify *to make contemptible, or cast a meanness upon*.

As to the substantive *demeanour*, it is a word the lower people are not acquainted with. If they were once to get hold on it, I make no doubt they would misapply it as much as they do the verb.

XIII. IF IN CASE.

THIS expression, which is the same as *if if*, and is consequently nonsense, is continually in the mouths of the lower people, who seem to have a mighty affection for it, and to think it nervous and elegant. It is likewise not infrequently used by many who ought to know better. Yet these words would not be improper, provided the *if* made part of one member of a sentence, and the *in case* of another. Suppose I say, for instance, *if, in case of a war between France and England, the king of Prussia should join with France*; this is very good sense. Here the *if* belongs to the king of Prussia should join with France, while the *in case* belongs to of a war between France and England: and, in order to make the distinction, it is necessary to put a comma at *if*, and another at *England*; but, as I have already said, these words, as they are commonly used, are nonsense.

XIV. ARRANT. ERRANT.

THESE two words are sometimes confounded by writers. *Errant* signifies *wandering*, according to its etymology, but is now seldom or never used in that sense, except with the substantive *knight*.—*A knight-errant*.

Arrant signifies *meer, downright*, and is used only in discommending, unless it be in a facetious and bantering style. We say, for example, *An arrant fool, an arrant coxcomb, an arrant knave*. But nobody says, *an arrant man of sense, an arrant modest man, an arrant man of probity*.

Yet

Yet, in a facetious and bantering style, as I have hinted, *arrant* may be used in speaking of agreeable and commendable qualities. If, for instance, I am told of several witticisms uttered by a man from whom I should not have expected them, or of exertions of courage by another, there would be no impropriety in my saying, *I find he's an arrant wit.—Why, he's an arrant hero.*

Such authors as confound these words seldom use *arrant* for *errant*, but frequently *errant* for *arrant*, (instances of which there are in Lord Shaftsbury, and in some others who pass for good writers) making it to signify *meer*, which is the signification only of *arrant*. But, in *speaking*, the other mistake more generally prevails; *arrant* being of ten pronounced instead of *errant*; and especially upon the stage, where there is a most shameful ignorance both of grammar and pronunciation. *Knight-arrants* are often talked of there; but we seldom hear of a *knight-errant*.

XV. *A Word, denoting a Number, joined with a Noun Substantive.*

WHERE this occurs, though the number be plural, the substantive (or what would be a substantive if it were uncompounded) is to be written without an *s* at the end. For instance, *The five-bell tavern, the three-tun inn, a twenty-gun ship, a four-wheel chaise*. These are the proper expressions; and not *the five-bells tavern, the three-tuns inn, a twenty-guns ship, a four-wheels chaise*.

Yet many people affect, both in writing and speaking, to use the *s*, and seem to value themselves upon their extraordinary correctness. But they ought to consider that, in compound words of this sort, what would be a substantive, if it stood single, is no longer such, but is become part of an adjective. For example, in the instances here brought, *five-bell, three-tun, twenty-gun* and *four-wheel* are adjectives, of which the respective substantives are *tavern, inn, ship* and *chaise*.

It is true that *five-bells, three-tuns, twenty-guns* and *four-wheels* might as grammatically be used as adjectives as *five-bell, three-tun, &c.* but custom seems to have determined for the omission of the *s*: the reason of which may possibly be that, where a word ends with two different consonants,

sonants, should the next word begin with another, the pronunciation of these three consonants would be, in some measure, painful, and the sound displeasing.

XVI. ARRIVE.

THIS word, where it is used in the proper sense, is followed by the article *at*, and not by *to*.

EXAMPLES.

We shall arrive at London early.—You will arrive at your country-house before night.—A person that should say, We shall arrive to London early.—You will arrive to your country-house before night—would nor talk English. And yet there are people of education ignorant enough to express themselves in this awkward manner.

In conformity to this rule, it is necessary to say *arrive there*, and not *arrive thither*; which last expression is not good English.

Yet, where the word *arrive* is figurative, *to* and *at* are, in most places, used indifferently. *He is arrived at great perfection.—He is arrived to great perfection.* Both these expressions are proper.

XVII. GET THITHER. GET THERE. GO THITHER. GO THERE.

THOUGH *arrive thither* is not good English, *get thither* is very proper, and is much better than *get there*.

With *go* and *come*, all correct speakers use the words *thither*, *whither* and *hither*.—*There*, *where* and *here*, though commonly used, are bad English.

XVIII. AGAIN. PRIZES.

AMONG other instances of ignorance, that we meet with upon the stage, is the improper use of the words *again* and *prizes*.—*Again* is used by many of the players instead of *against*, (a shrewd sign of a very low education) and *prizes* instead of *prices*. *We have them of all prizes*, says Lockit, upon the stage, where Macheath's irons are put on.

These

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These people ought to know that *prices* is here the proper word, and not *prizes*. What is paid for the purchase of any thing is its *price*. As to *prize*, it signifies a *booty* or *capture*, a *benefit gained by a ticket in a lottery*, and likewise *the reward given to the victor in any trial of skill*.

One cannot help blushing for these players, to think they must be told that *again* signifies *once more*, and that *against* means *opposite* (or *opposed*) *to*.

XIX. FAMOUS, OR RATHER INFAMOUS.

THIS expression is found in many authors, who seem to value themselves not a little upon it, and to think it mighty smart. *He was famous, or rather infamous, for his cruelty*, says one.—*He was famous, or rather infamous, for his debaucheries*, says another.—*She was famous, or rather infamous, for her lewdness*, says a third. And yet, in reality, there is no smartness in this. It has nothing of the lively antithesis, which these writers imagine it to have. The opposition between *famous* and *infamous* lies only in the sound, and not in the sense; for these two words have not senses contrary to each other. *Famous* signifies *renowned*, *much known*; but *infamous* does not signify *obscure* or *unknown*. It signifies *vile*, *scandalous*, *base*. It is true it likewise implies *of evil report*; but even in this sense it cannot properly be opposed to *famous* or *renowned*, the opposite of which is (as I have hinted) *obscure* or *unknown*.

Let us put another phrase of the same import in the room of *famous*, and we shall see the nothingness of the thought. For instance, *He was well known, or rather infamous, for the wickedness of his life*. What a poor, unmeaning speech is this! and how impertinently does the *or rather* come in! In short, this expression of *famous, or rather infamous*, though it be found in some tolerable writers, is very childish and silly; and I would caution every one against the use of it.

XX. HUMOROUS. HUMORSOME.

THOUGH *humorsome*, instead of *humorous*, be chiefly heard among the low people, (none of whom, in all probability,

bability, will ever study this book, to learn good English) yet, as there are few bad expressions used by the vulgar, but what sometimes make their way into better company, it is proper to take notice that the word, which implies *comical*, is *humorous*, and not *humorsome*; the signification of which last word is *peevish, forward, hard to please*.

There is extant a letter written by Congreve, wherein he condemns the word *humour* as made to signify *what is comical or facetious*. He seems to affirm this is not the real meaning of it, and that the true sense of *humour* is *what is characteristic of a certain temper*. I do not recollect his very words; but these, which I have employed, convey at least the idea, which, as he contends, ought to be conveyed by the word *humour*. So that, according to him, a stroke, which characterises a man, and expresses his peculiar turn of mind, is to be called *humour*; and such stroke has nothing the more of *humour* for exciting mirth.

Now it is to be considered that words are nothing at all in themselves. They signify that, and that only, which, by common consent, is understood by them: and it is undeniable that the word *humour* is received by all people of education (and has been so for a long time) in the sense he does not allow it to have. We find instances of it in Shakespeare, who wrote above a hundred and fifty years ago. The word then being universally understood to imply *what excites mirth*, this is of course the signification of it: to which it is no objection that it also bears another signification, there being many words that have different senses.

XXI. *Adverbs and Participles improperly disjoined.*

It is common for people to express themselves in the following manner. *I don't know so well a bred man.—You seldom see so well a made woman.—I never rode so ill a going horse.—I never saw so poorly a painted picture.*

This is wrong. The *a* ought to follow the participle, not to precede it; and the adverb and participle ought to be joined together by a hyphen, and to make but one word. For instance, *I don't know so well-bred a man.—You seldom see so well-made a woman.—I never rode so ill-going a horse.—I never saw so poorly-painted a picture.*

XXII. HAD RETIRED FOR SEVERAL YEARS PAST.

WE often find in our news-papers paragraphs penned in the following manner. *On such a day died at—Mr.—who, having acquired a good fortune in business, had retired for some years past.*

This is an improper expression. These printers ought to say, either *who, having acquired a good fortune, retired some years ago*—or, *who, having acquired a good fortune, had been retired for some years past*; of which two expressions the first is most easy and natural. In that which they use, the *had retired* and the *for* are incompatible with each other, the *for* here signifying *during*. It therefore implies that the deceased had retired during several years; which either has no sense at all, or signifies that he spent several years in the act of retiring. But there is a wide difference between *spending several years in the act of retiring*, and *being retired (or in retirement) during several years*.

It is true the words *retire* and *for* are sometimes very properly used together: but in this last mentioned case the word *for* has not the signification of *during*. Suppose, for instance, a man has danced at a ball till he is fatigued: he says to a friend, *I'll retire into another room for half an hour, and then come in again*. Here the word *for*, as I have said, does not signify *during*. He retires (or is retiring) only while he is passing from the ball-room into the room where he intends to rest. When he is in that room, he is no longer retiring; for he is then retired, or in retirement. In like manner, a man who has quitted the business he was following in London, and is now settled in the country, is retired, (or in retirement): but he does not retire; he is not retiring; for he retires (or is retiring) only while he is going from London to the place where he settles.

It would be therefore proper (as I have already hinted) for these printers to say, *He retired some years ago*, or, *he had been retired for some years past*. But, when they say, *He had retired for some years past*, they talk nonsense.

XXIII. *The Note of Interrogation improperly used.*

IT is common with writers to put a note of interrogation where they only make mention of a question's being asked, without employing the very words which form the question.

EXAMPLES.

I saw your aunt the other day, who inquired when I heard from you last?—I visited your sister yesterday.—She asked me when I thought you would be in town? This is wrong. There ought to be no note of interrogation, since there is no question.

Indeed, though the writer asks no question himself, if the interrogatory, which he mentions, be put in the form of a question, the note is very proper: as, for instance, *As I was talking with your aunt the other day, when, said she, did you hear from my nephew last? Being yesterday upon a visit to your sister, when, said she, do you imagine my brother will be in town?*

XXIV. *An improper Use of the Pronoun relative HE.*

THERE are many writers, who introduce this pronoun as a relative to the indefinite noun *one*. Instead of saying, *Unless one be very cautious, one will be liable to be deceived by pretended friends.—If one indulge much in eating and drinking, one almost certainly suffers for it in point of health.—They would say, Unless one be very cautious, he will be liable to be deceived by pretended friends.—If one indulge much in eating and drinking, he almost certainly suffers for it in point of health.*

This is not good English. The *one* here is not the unit in number. It has the sense of *on* in the French tongue, from which it is taken, and does not suffer a relative pronoun.

To shew the impropriety of the above use of the word *he*, let us suppose an assembly of women, where the conversation runs upon the pleasure they feel in being admired by the male sex, and that one of the company says, *One cannot possibly help being delighted with the admiration of the men: let her make what use of her reason she will, she is still highly pleased with it.* Will any one pretend to say this is English? No person of tolerable taste would endure

endure the *she*, the pronoun substantive *her*, or the pronoun adjective *her*. And yet this expression would be proper, if the *he* could at any time with propriety be used as a relative to this indefinite noun *one*. This woman ought to repeat the *one*, and to say *One cannot possibly help being delighted with the admiration of the men. Let one make what use of one's reason one will, one is still highly pleased with it.* There is nothing offensive in the recurrence of the word *one*.

It is likewise wrong to use either *him*, *her*, *himself*, or *herself*, as the genitive, dative, accusative or ablative of this indefinite noun. The proper genitives, datives, accusatives, and ablatives are *one* and *one's-self*. For instance, *He watches his opportunities to take one at a disadvantage.—He is of a friendly temper, and does one all the service he can.—The love of one's-self.—One sometimes finds an unexpected resource in one's-self.*

XXV. *Apostrophes improperly used.*

IT is a common practice, even with good writers, to put an apostrophe between the *a* and the *s* of the words *ideas* and *operas*, and of many others, of which the singular ends with the letter *a*.

This is certainly wrong. For why should an apostrophe be placed where there is no letter omitted?

They put this apostrophe likewise between the *o* and the *s* of the plurals of *virtuoso*, *virago*, and of some other words ending with *o*, and write *virtuoso's*, *virago's*, &c.

Indeed, as to these two words, they may possibly pretend there is an *e* omitted, and that the apostrophe is the mark of that elision.

In the first place, I can see no reason for an *e* in either of these two words. I think the true spelling is *virtuosos*, *viragos*. But, even supposing these plurals to have an *e*, why should the *e* be cut off any more than in *toes*, *foes*, *floes*? There is not the least ground imaginable for such practice, and the words ought to be written at full length, the pronunciation being the same when the *e* is inserted as when it is omitted, and its place supplied with an apostrophe.

The same absurdity prevails in regard to those words, whose singular number ends with an *s*; as *genius*, *summons*,

chorus, &c. The plurals of these words ought to be written *geniuses*, *summonses*, *choruses*, &c.

XXVI. *Other improper Elisions.*

NOTHING is more frequent than, in writing the preterperfect tense active, or the participle passive of a verb that ends with a consonant, to spell it with a single consonant, if the *e*, the last letter but one, be cut off.

EXAMPLES.

He received a blow that stun'd him.—He was stun'd with the blow.

This is wrong. The word ought to be written with a double consonant. *A blow that stunn'd him.—He was stunn'd.*

By this practice of cutting off one of the consonants with the *e*, many words of very different meanings, and pronounced differently, and which, when written at full length, are likewise differently spelt, are confounded, by being spelt alike. For instance, *Tiled* and *tilled*, *filed* and *filled*, *bared* and *barred*, *planed* and *planned*, *stripped* and *stripped*, *tuned* and *tunned*, *scared* and *scarred*, *robed* and *robbed*, *stiled* and *stilled*, with several others. It hurts the eye to see words of such different senses and of different sounds, spelt in the same manner.

Instead of *I'll*, the contraction of *I will*, many people write *I'lc*. I do not see what right the *e* has in a word, when contracted, which admits no such letter, when written at full length: and I think it offensive to the eye. Those, who make use of it, are fearful perhaps that the word, when written with a double *l*, will be mistaken for the word *ill*. But the apostrophe seems to be a sufficient guard against any such misapprehension.

XXVII. *A wrong Method of speaking of a double Letter.*

THE mention of a double *l* puts me in mind of a mistake that writers often commit in speaking of a double letter. Instead of saying *a dd*, or *a double d*, they would say *a double dd*. But a double *dd* is a quadruple *d*, in which there are four *ds*: and yet they mean to speak but of two. They should say either *a dd* or *a double d*.

XXVIII.

XXVIII. *An Oversight, of which Authors are now and then guilty.*

WE sometimes, even in tolerable writers, meet with expressions to the same purpose with this, *If I mistake not, I think so and so*; which is an absurdity; for surely every man knows whether he thinks a thing or not. We say, indeed, jestingly, of an irresolute person, that he does not know his own mind.

The *If I mistake not*, and the *I think*, are therefore not both to be used.

There is an oversight of this kind in Moliere's comedy of the *The School for Husbands*; and another in his *Learned Women*.

XXIX. TO FLY, FLEE, FLOW, OVER-FLOW.

THE preter-perfect tense of the first of these verbs, when it signifies *To move with wings*, is *flew*.—*The bird flew away*.

With the auxiliaries, *flown* is to be used. *The bird is flown away—they would have flown away—having flown—being flown, &c.*

To fly is likewise frequently used, to signify *to flee*; which latter word is too much neglected. And, since even our best authors do not scruple to employ it instead of *flee*, it must be owned to have that signification; though I cannot help thinking its being used in this sense is a deformity in the language. When it signifies *to flee*, the preter-perfect tense is *fled*.—*He fled away*: but the participle present is *flying*, as when it signifies *to move with wings*.—*The army is flying*.

With the auxiliaries, *fled* is to be used.—*They are fled—He had fled—Having fled—Being fled, &c.*

As to the verb *to flee*, the preter-perfect tense is here likewise *fled*, which is also to be used with the auxiliaries. For instance, *We fled away—They are fled—They would have fled—Having fled—Being fled—&c.*

The preter-perfect of *flow* is *flowed*.—*The tide flowed with a strong current*. *Flowed* is likewise to be used with the auxiliaries—*Has flowed—Having flowed—&c.*

Many people use *flown* with the auxiliaries, and would say *The river has flown but weakly of late*. But this is not English. Neither is the word *overflowed* to be admitted, though frequently used. The proper word is *overflowed*.—*The river has overflowed its banks*.—*The grounds are overflowed*.

XXX. CAME.

THIS word, which is the preter-perfect of *come*, is used by some writers now living with the auxiliary verbs. Instead of saying *He is come*, *He would have come*, they would say *He is came*, *He would have came*. But this is not English. Because, forsooth, in the generality of our verbs, the word used in the preter-perfect tense is the same with that used with the auxiliaries, they will have it to be so likewise in this instance. But the verb *to come* is an exception to this rule; as is also the verb *to go*, which has been mentioned already.

If these writers persist in this use of the word *came*, I would advise them not to be inconsistent with themselves, to employ the word *went* likewise with the auxiliaries, and to say *He has went*—*He had went*—*They are went*—and, instead of *The bird is flown*, *the bird is flew*. In short, so many of our verbs are exceptions to the rule above-mentioned, that, if we should bring them all to conform to it, we should have a new language.

XXXI. TO SEW. TO SOW.

THE first of these (which signifies *to stitch with needle and thread*) is a regular verb, the preter-perfect being *sewed*, and the same word being used with the auxiliaries. *She has sewed it*—*It is well sewed*.

But to *sow* (*to scatter corn or seed upon ploughed or otherwise prepared ground*) is irregular, in that either *sowed* or *sown* is used with the auxiliaries; the last of which two words is the most frequently employed. *He has sown his corn*—*The corn is sown*.

And yet I know not whether, in speaking of the ground, I should not prefer *sowed*, and rather say *the ground is sowed* than *the ground is sown*. However, I do not insist upon it that this expression is the best.

XXXII.

XXXII. TO SET. TO SIT.

THESE two verbs are continually confounded in more than one tense, and give occasion to innumerable instances of false English. Even people of very good education misemploy them.

The first of them, which has several different significations, does not change in any of the tenses, let the signification of the word be what it will. We say *What time do you set out?*—*He set out yesterday for Bath.*—*I shall set somebody to watch them.*

Set is likewise used with the auxiliaries. *A dog was set at me.*—*He is now set about it in good earnest.*—*He has set down his load.*—*I ought to have set the trees some time ago.*—*They being so violently set against each other, there is no probability of a reconciliation.*

As to the verb to sit, its preter-perfect is sat, which is also used with the auxiliaries. *He sat down.*—*When we had sat there some time, we removed.*—*Having sat with us about an hour, they left us.*

This verb is sometimes used not as a neuter, but as a verb active, with an accusative case following it. *I'll sit me down.*—*She sat her down.*—*They sat themselves down.*

But it is to be observed that the verb is active, and governs an accusative, only when we speak of persons seating themselves, and not in mentioning their causing others to sit. Therefore such expressions as these—*I'll sit you down.*—*He sat her down.*—*They sat us down.*—are not proper.

To seat is a regular verb. Seated, which is the preter-perfect, is used with the auxiliaries. *He seated himself.*—*When we had seated ourselves.*—*She was seated.*—*They being seated.*

XXXIII. TO LIE. TO LAY.

THESE two verbs are as often confounded as set and sit; of which the occasion, in a great measure, may be that the word lay happens to be the preter-perfect tense of the verb to lie.

To lie is a regular verb. Its preter-perfect is *laid*. This is likewise the word used with the auxiliaries. For instance, *He laid the money down.—He laid about him lustily.—We laid no stress upon that.—I have laid a wager.—They had laid out all their money.—The wind is laid.—The things are laid in order.—Having laid the burden upon the horse.—The case being laid before him.*

The preter-perfect of the verb *to lie* is *lay*; and the word used with the auxiliaries is *lain*. For example. *I was lazy this morning, and lay long a-bed.—They went yesterday for Bath, and lay at Reading.—I was lately at his country-house, where I lay two nights.—I have lain in this bed above a dozen years.—The house has lain in ruins for a considerable time.—She was taken ill; but, having lain down for about an hour, she found herself well.*

To lie, when it signifies *to tell lies*, is a regular verb. The preter-perfect is *lied*, which is the word used with the auxiliaries. *He lied egregiously.—He has always lied from his cradle.*

XXXIV. OVERLAIN.

THERE is such a word as this: but it is for the most part improperly employed.

The child is overlain says one. *The nurse has overlain the child.* This is not good English; for *overlain* belongs to the verb *overlie*, not to the verb *overlay*: and yet *overlay* is the verb used where mention is made of a nurse's pressing and smothering a child. Now the participle passive of *overlay*, and the word used with the auxiliaries, is *overlaid*, and not *overlain*.

The proper way of speaking therefore is this. *I am afraid she'll overlay the child.—The nurse has overlaid the child.—The child is overlaid.*

And yet I cannot help suspecting that, if the expression was invented by reasonable people, *overlie*, and not *overlay*, was the word originally used in speaking of nurses' smothering children. A child being killed by the nurse's lying over it, it seems most natural that the word should be composed of *over* and *lie*, and not of *over* and *lay*. But nurses, and those about them, being commonly very ignorant,

norant, and your low ignorant people almost ever using *lay* for *lie*, and *laid* for *lain*, *overlaid* presently took place among them, instead of *overlie*; and, persons of sense or learning being commonly strangers to the nursery, and seldom mentioning or thinking about the smothering of children, the nurses' language has universally obtained.

Or shall we rather believe that the word was *not* invented by reasonable people, but that it was coined in the nursery? This, after all, appears the most probable. For there is no doubt but words are commonly invented by those, who are fullest of the ideas intended to be conveyed by them. And whom shall we suppose to think so often of the overlaying children as nurses and their companions? If this be the case; if the word was invented in the nursery, *overlay* (and not *overlie*) is most probably, for the reason mentioned above, (*viz.* the low people's using *lay* for *lie*) the original word.

As to the verb *overlie*, it is used where we speak of a person's continuing in bed beyond a proper time. *I am sleepy to-night, and shall overlie myself in the morning, if I am not called.—I slept beyond my time, and overlay myself this morning.—'Tis later than I thought I find I have overlain myself.*

XXXV. *An Improper Way of mentioning Titles.*

OUR news-writers, mentioning their intelligence from Oxford or Cambridge, frequently tell us that on such a day was conferred on such and such gentlemen the degree of *Doctors of Divinity*. This expression is wrong: they ought to say *The degree of Doctor of Divinity*.

In like manner, though we say very properly *The King has made* (or *created*) *these two gentlemen Barons*, it would not be right to say *The King has conferred the dignity of Barons on them*. The proper expression is *The King has conferred the dignity of Barons on them*.

So likewise, in speaking of one man, who has received the honour, though we say *He is made* (or *created*) *a Baronet*, we ought not to say *The dignity of a Baronet is conferred on him*; but *the dignity of Baronet is conferred on him*, omitting the word *a*.

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The same rule is to be observed in speaking of any other title, or of any post. *The King has conferred on them the title of Duke.—The King has conferred on him the title of Duke.—Those two Counsellors were both raised to the post of Attorney General.—He was raised to the post of Attorney-General.* These are the proper expressions; and the following ones are improper. *The King has conferred on them the title of Dukes.—The King has conferred on him the title of a Duke.—Those two counsellors were both raised to the post of Attorney-Generals.—He was raised to the post of the (or of an) Attorney-General.*

XXXVI. UP, DOWN. ABOVE, BELOW.

To go (or come) *up stairs*, to go (or come) *down stairs*, are proper expressions.

To go (or come) *above stairs*, to go (or come) *below stairs*, though frequently used, are not strictly proper.

On the other hand, *To be above stairs—to be below stairs*, are proper.

To be up stairs, *to be down stairs*, are improper; unless the *being up* or *down* imply the *getting up* or *down*. As, for instance—a man says *I called him down stairs*, and he was down in an instant. There is nothing improper in this, because *he was down* is equivalent to *he got down stairs*, or, in other words, *to be arrived below stairs*, and therefore does not imply his abiding there.

Neither are these two words, *got* and *arrived*, (which I have made use of to explain the matter) to be employed indiscriminately with *up*, *down*, *above* or *below stairs*.

To get is to be used with *up* or *down*; and *to arrive* with *above* and *below*. Suppose I see a very gouty man a long time in coming down a stair-case. I say, upon his landing, *At length, after much hobbling, he is got down stairs*; or *at length, after much hobbling, he is arrived below stairs*. *Got below stairs*, in the sense here intended, would be uncouth; and *arrived down stairs* would be still more so.

Yet, in another sense, *got above* or *below stairs* would be proper. If a man has lived formerly upon a ground-floor, but lives now over-head, I say, very properly, *He is now got above stairs*; because here my meaning is
that

that he is *abiding* or *continuing* there: whereas, agreeably to what has been already observed, if I send a servant to an upper apartment, as soon as he has mounted the top-most step of the stair-case, I ought to say *he is got up stairs*. If I should say *he is got above stairs*, I should talk bad English.

We have other words, which, used with *up* or *down*, have a different sense from what they have when used with *above* or *below*. It would be too tedious to produce them all, and I shall mention only the word *dispatch*. If I say *I'll dispatch my servant up stairs*, it means that I will send him up; whereas, if I say *I'll dispatch him above stairs*, the meaning is that I will dispatch him when I am above.

These distinctions have nothing finical or affected in them. Most people make them mechanically; and such as confound the words in question (which even persons of education are apt to do in some of our remote counties) cannot be said to talk good English.

XXXVII. IMMINENT. EMINENT.

MANY of our writers use the latter of these two words with the substantive *danger*, and, instead of *an imminent danger*, say *an eminent danger*; than which surely there cannot be a greater absurdity. Can there be a more just expression than *an imminent danger*? Which signifies a danger where the evil threatened is at hand. But what is a *noted* or *illustrious* danger? For this is the meaning of the expression they use.

This misapplication of the word *eminent* took its rise, in all probability, from an itch of imitating the French. They have, in their language, the three words *imminent*, *eminent* and *danger*; which, as they are spelt in the same manner as in the English, have likewise the same significations. Now so it has happened (whatever the cause may have been) that this expression of *an eminent danger* has introduced itself among *them*. It is of long standing; and so universal is it become that a Frenchman cannot talk of an *imminent* danger without speaking uncouthly. This is a considerable blemish in their tongue; and their writers, who are sensible of the inconvenience, are often reduced to this dilemma, when they mention an impending danger, *viz.* either to talk nonsense, or to make use of

of an expression that appears stiff. And shall *we*, from a fondness of imitating that nation, introduce into our language a way of speaking which they themselves own to be a deformity in theirs, and which their writers would be glad to banish?

The impropriety, if it should take place here, would be more unpardonable than it was in *France*. In all probability, it began there among the ignorant, who always make the bulk of a nation, and was not adopted by the learned (some of whom, even to this day, persist in the use of the word *imminent*) till it was become almost general; whereas the people, who use it among *us*, are *writers*, men whose duty it is to endeavour to polish a language, and, consequently, to discountenance all barbarous expressions.

XXXVIII. PURPOSE. PROPOSE.

To propose signifies *to make an offer, or a proposal of*. *To purpose* signifies *to intend, to design*. How different are these two senses! and how wrong is it then to make so little use as we do of the verb *to purpose*, and so often to employ *to propose* in its stead? This is the more injudicious, as, notwithstanding the difference there is between *to make a proposal*, and *to intend*, there are many places where the word *propose* might be understood to mean either the one or the other, and, consequently, where the speaker or writer would be liable to be misapprehended; as has been already remarked in regard to the word *ingenuity*, which is employed to signify either *candour* or *ability*. Why do not we likewise neglect the substantive *purpose*, and employ *proposal* in the room of it? For I cannot see why the substantive should have better quarter than the verb.

Is the giving this wrong sense to the verb *propose* in imitation of the French, as I have suspected the use of the expression *eminent danger* to be? If so, the introducers of it have not hit the mark: for, though it cannot be affirmed that the word *proposer*, which signifies *to make a proposal of*, does not likewise signify *to intend*, yet it is now seldom used in this latter sense: and a Frenchman would rather say *Il se propose de faire cela* than *Il propose de faire cela*; which latter expression would be equivocal, the most obvious meaning of these words being *he makes a proposal of doing that*,

that, which would not be the sense of the speaker; whereas the words *il se propose de faire cela* (verbatim, in English, *he proposes to himself to do that*) have but one meaning, and cannot be misunderstood: and, in all probability, the French accompany the word *proposer* with *se*, in order to avoid the double sense it would otherwise have; whereas we, on the contrary, foolishly reject a word of single sense, and to which there can be no reasonable exception, and supply its place with an ambiguous one; as if there were a beauty in ambiguity, a thing which tends to defeat the very intention of language—the communication of thoughts.

I can assign no other cause than this inclination to imitate the French, for the habit some writers now living have got of using the verb *to lay* instead of *to lie*, which I have already observed to be a common vice in speaking, though few have been hitherto guilty of it in print. The French word *coucher* is both active and neuter, and signifies *to lay*, and also *to lie*. Upon this account (as I have here hinted) I suspect it is that these writers never employ the verb *to lie*; which I therefore suppose they would banish out of our language. “The French make shift with one verb, and why should not we?” Most admirable reasoning, truly! As if the having different words for different meanings were not a perfection in a language, and the want of them a defect. A reasonable man, if he were not a witness of it, would hardly conceive there could be such an instance of want of judgment.

This propensity to adopt French customs puts me in mind of the following circumstance, which I have often heard affirmed as a certain fact.

Though the French have in general strong and good hair, and are not so subject to baldness as we are, it so happened, about the year 1734, that the hair of many people of both sexes at Paris fell off: in consequence of which, they wore wigs. Thereupon numbers of women in *England*, hearing of what had been done at Paris, cut off good heads-of-hair, and wore wigs likewise; to which those French women had had recourse only to conceal a deformity.

I would not be understood, from any thing I have here said, to advise the avoiding the French customs; I would only dissuade

diffuade from the adopting them merely as French. Let us imitate that, or any other nation, in what is in itself right; but not run into absurd habits because those habits had their birth in this or that place. We have already improved our language not a little by expressions taken from the French, and may improve it still more by the same means. But, at the same time, let us endeavour to discern wherein we have the advantage, and where that nation ought rather to copy us than we them.

XXXIX. NOBLE AUTHOR.

THIS is an expression mightily affected by many of our writers, in speaking of the literary works of a nobleman: and they seem to pay their court by it to him or his manes.

I cannot see what a man's nobility has to do with his authorship; and the expression, especially if often repeated, is certainly very childish; and particularly in the pulpit, where *the noble historian* makes the most striking part of the rhetoric of many a sermon on the 30th of January.

The epithet *royal* appears to me to be often as needlessly used as *noble*.—*It is his majesty's royal will and pleasure*, says the speaker of the house of lords, *that this parliament be prorogued*. Is not this saying *It is the king's kingly will and pleasure*? and would it not be much more simple, and much better to say, *It is his majesty's will and pleasure*.

If the word *royal* be introduced, it would be best, as I conceive, to omit *the his majesty's*, and to say *It is the royal will and pleasure*. Herein there is nothing of puerility; but, on the contrary, a nobleness and a simplicity. Labour'd and pompous epithets do, for the most part, but lessen, instead of aggrandizing, the objects spoken of.

XL. HIM. HER. ME. THEM.

THESE pronouns are frequently used in the nominative case, even among the better sort of people. 'Tis *him*.—'Tis *her*.—'Tis *me*.—'Tis *them*. This is bad English: *He*, *she*, *I*, and *they*, are the proper words.

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We have few writers who are more seldom guilty of false English than Congreve, or who have written in so elegant a style. Yet in his *Way of the World* he has used the word *me* improperly.

"*Millamant*. What was the quarrel?"

"*Petulant*. There was no quarrel. There might have been a quarrel.

"*Witwoud*. If there had been words enow to have expressed provocation, they had gone together by the ears, like a pair of castanets.

"*Petulant*. You were the quarrel.

"*Millamant*. *Me!*"

This is wrong. She ought to say *I*.

Yet it must be owned there are some places where the nominative is required, and where the word *I*, as having too thin and unsubstantial a sound, would not do.

There is an instance of this in the same play, where my Lady Wishfort says to Mrs. Fainall "O daughter, daughter, is it possible thou shouldst be my child, bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, and (as I may say) another *me*, and yet transgress the minutest particle of severe virtue?" Here the word *I*, though correct English, would be awkward, and *me*, though not grammatical, does better. The word *myself* might indeed have been used: being a nominative, it would have been grammar: and I think I should have preferred it to *me*. Nor are there many places where the word *I*, when the sound of it would be too poor, might not be substituted by *myself*.

Some inferior writers seem to think they shew an extraordinary correctness by using an accusative case where a verb active follows, as supposing it to be governed by that verb. For example, instead of *It was not he they attacked*.—*It was not we they slandered*—they would say *It was not him they attacked*.—*It was not us they slandered*—imagining *him* and *us* to be accusatives governed respectively by the verbs *attacked* and *slandered*. But they write false English: these pronouns ought to be in the nominative case, as following the verb *was*. There is indeed an accusative, (viz. *whom*, or *that*) governed by *attacked* and *slandered*: but this accusative is supposed, the regular way of speaking being this, *It was not he, whom*
C (or

(or that) they attacked.—It was not we, whom (or that) they slandered.

XLI. PULSE.

PULSE, as signifying the pulsation of the blood, is improperly used by many people as a plural. Instead of *How does your pulse beat?—Your pulse is too quick.*—they would say *How do your pulses beat?—Your pulses are too quick.* They are deceived by the letter *s*, which being the last letter that is pronounced, they from thence take the word to be in the plural number: but this word is singular, and the plural is *pulses*.—*The pulses of two or more persons—The different pulses of the wrists, temples, and other parts of the body.*

In speaking of such vegetables as are called *pulse*, we say *pulse of different sorts*, or *different sorts of pulse*; and not *different pulses*, or *different sorts of pulses*: so that this word has no plural.

XLII. NEITHER READ NOR WRITE.

THIS is the common way of speaking: but it is certainly wrong, it being much more proper to say *He can neither write nor read*—than *he can neither read nor write*. To what purpose is it to say that a man cannot write, after having said that he cannot read? for, if he cannot read, it follows of course that he cannot write.

It being, for the reason here given, better to say *He can neither write nor read* than *he can neither read nor write*, it is consequently better to say *He can both read and write* than *he can both write and read*; since, if a man can write, we must necessarily suppose that he can read.

XLIII. MUTUAL.

THIS word is often improperly employed. It ought to be used only when we would signify that there is an interchange. If a man and a woman have a love for each other, there is a *mutual* love between them. If two men have a friendship each for the other, their friendship is *mutual*. But
let

let us suppose A to be a benefactor to B and likewise to C: it would be absurd in B, speaking to C concerning A, to say *Our mutual benefactor*: the proper expression would be *our common benefactor*. A king is the *common* sovereign, not the *mutual* sovereign, of his several subjects; for there is here no reciprocation, or interchange, that justifies the use of the word *mutual*. And yet many of our writers employ *mutual* in cases similar to these. But our most judicious writers take care to avoid it. Mr. Locke, in a letter to Dr. Molyneux, speaking of the Doctor's brother, then lately dead, says very properly *The esteem I have for the memory of our common friend*. Had he said *our mutual friend*, he had not talked sense: for, though there had subsisted a *mutual* friendship between Mr. Locke and the deceased, and the same between the two brothers, yet there is nothing of interchange between Mr. Locke and the surviving brother implied in the circumstance of the friendship there had been between the deceased and each of *them* separately,

It must be owned, after all, that there are places where the word *common*, though more proper in respect of its sense, would sound but awkwardly, and where, for want of an easy-sounding word, in the language, of the same import, *mutual* must be borne with.

XLIV. LEFT OFF.

WE see continually in our news-papers advertisements written in the following manner.

*To be sold, The stock of Mr. —, left off trade. —
The goods of such-a-one, left off house-keeping.*

This is nonsense; the words *left off*, whether they are considered as a verb, or as a participle, having here no substantive, with which they are connected.

These advertisers, instead of *left off*, ought to say either *leaving off*, or *who has left off*. For instance, *The stock of Mr. A, leaving off trade. — The goods of Mrs. B, leaving off house-keeping. — The stock of Mr. A, who has left off trade. — The goods of Mrs. B, who has left off house-keeping.*

XLV. UNDENIABLE.

WE likewise often see in the news-papers advertisements for places by people, who tell the public their characters are *undeniable*.

This word, as they use it, is not sense. If I draw a character of a man, and afterwards affirm the character I have given him to be *undeniable*, this is a proper way of speaking, and signifies that I have delivered nothing but truth. But the meaning of these people is that their characters are such as no reasonable exception can be made to. They ought therefore to say that their characters are (not *undeniable*, but) *unexceptionable*.

XLVI. NEITHER. EITHER.

WE have numberless writers, who make these adjectives plural where they ought to make them singular.

Is either of these two men a relation of yours?—No, neither of them is. This is the proper way of speaking, and not (as some would say), *Are either of these two men relations of yours?—No, neither of them are.*

Here *either* is equivalent to *any one*, or *ever a one*; and *neither* to *no one*, or *never a one*.

But, when these adjectives refer to substantives plural, they become plural themselves: as, for instance.—*The French and the English give strange accounts one of another. Are either of them impartial? No: neither of them are.*

Where they refer to two substantives, one singular, and the other plural, it seems most natural to make them plural.

XLVII. LESS.

THIS word is most commonly used in speaking of a number; where I should think *fewer* would do better. *No fewer than a hundred* appears to me not only more elegant than *no less than a hundred*, but more strictly proper.

XLVIII.

XLVIII. CONTEMPTUOUSLY.

CONTEMPTUOUSLY, to signify with *contempt*, is a better word than *contemptibly*, though this last is most commonly used. If I hear it said that one man treats another *contemptibly*, I hardly know whether the meaning is that he treats him with contempt, or that his own behaviour is contemptible.

XLIX. POSSESSED OF. POSSESSED BY.

A MAN that knows how to mingle pleasures with business, says some author, (and I think it is my Lord Bolingbroke) is never possessed of them. He quits and retakes them at his will.

Possessed of them is here wrong. The proper expression would have been *possessed by them*. If I possess a thing, I am possessed of it; if it possesses me, I am possessed by it.

L. 'TIS SO MANY TO ONE BUT, &c.

'TIS twenty to one but (or but that) it will happen.—
'Tis ten to one but (or but that) he will be displeased.

This is a very common way of speaking, though, in my opinion, a very absurd one. What has the word *but* to do here? It has certainly no meaning. Is it not therefore more elegant and more natural to leave it out, and to say 'Tis twenty to one it will happen, or, that it will happen.—
'Tis ten to one he will be displeased, or, that he will be displeased.

LI. TO PROFIT OF.

MY Lord Bolingbroke seems fond of this expression.

We say to take advantage of this or that circumstance, or to make an advantage by it, or to profit by it.

To profit of I conceive not to be English.

LII.

THOUGH I do not allow to profit of to be English, to make profit of is, without doubt, a very proper expression.

They found mankind immersed in superstition, and accustomed to licentiousness. To cure them of the latter, they made their profit of the former.

Lord Bolingbroke.

LIII.

WE find in many authors (and, among others, in Swift) the expression of *The manner of it is thus*.

The word *thus* signifies *in this manner*. It should seem, therefore, as though the *the manner of it is thus* were as much as to say *the manner of it is in this manner*; which is nonsense.

It is better to say *the manner of it is this*.

LIV. PRESENTIMENT.

THIS French word is wrongly translated by some of our writers *pre-sentiment*: for *pre-sentiment* has no meaning.

It ought to be translated (as it is by some few) *pre-sensation*; which word would be very useful in our language, and ought therefore to be adopted.

The French word does not signify a *fore-knowledge*, but an unaccountable *fore-feeling*, of what will happen.

LV. HUES AND CRIES.

SOME writers use this expression, and would say *There were several hues and cries after him*.

This seems to be wrong; and I should think it better to say *hue-and-cries*; for in the singular number we do not say *a hue and a cry*, but *a hue-and-cry*, making one word of three: for which reason, and likewise because it is seldom used, *hues and cries* sounds uncouthly.

LVI. FELL.

THIS word is used by almost all incorrect speakers, and even by many writers, instead of *fallen*.—*The horse has fell.*
—*The house is fell.*

This is not good English. The proper word (as here hinted) is *fallen*.

LVII.

LVII. WORN. TORN.

THESE words are much better with the auxiliaries than *wore* and *tore*.—*These cloaths are but little worn.*—*He has worn this suit for some time.*—*He has torn the writings.*—*The writings are torn.*

LVIII. COMPUTED TO.

THE rents of land in Ireland may be computed to two millions. Swift.

Computed at would have been the proper expression. *To compute to* I look upon not to be English.

LIX. WRECK MALICE.

MANY writers say *to wreck malice*; and the expression occurs several times in Swift.

To wreak malice is the proper expression; *to wreak* signifying *to discharge*.

LX. INSTANT. INSTANTANEOUS.

SOME writers confound these two adjectives, and likewise the adverbs *instantly* and *instantaneously*, making them respectively synonymous. Others distinguish them, and make *instant* to signify *immediate*, *just at hand*, and *instantaneous* to imply *of no duration*. For example; *His coming is instant.*—*He will be here instantly.*—*A flash of lightning is instantaneous.*—*A flash of lightning exists but instantaneously.*

It is best to make the distinction. Different meanings ought, undoubtedly, to be expressed in different words; without which, the intention of language is not answered.

LXI. BOTH.

THIS word is often introduced in an absurd manner.

The goddess Minerva had heard of one Arachne, a young virgin very famous for spinning and weaving. They both met upon a trial of skill. Swift.

What

What does he mean by saying *they both met*? The word *both* is superfluous, and seems to make nonsense. One would imagine the author thought there was a possibility that, in the interview between them, one of them could meet without the other's meeting. If two people come together, they must *both* come together of course. It would be ridiculous to say *There is a contest between both of those two men*: for, if two men are engaged in a contest, they must necessarily be *both* engaged in that contest.

It must be owned, however, that this word sometimes gives a seemingly wanted force to an expression, where the sense is complete without it: and there it is to be not only borne with, but approved. But in the passage above cited, and in numberless others where we meet with it, it is impertinent.

LXII. IN COMPARISON OF.

THIS is an expression used by many of our writers, and, among others, by Lord Bolingbroke, in whom it is very frequent.

In comparison with seems to me to be preferable. *This is very good in comparison of that.*—*This is very good in comparison with that.* Is not the latter plainly the better expression of the two? and does it not make the best sense?

LXIII.

FAINALL says to Mirabel, in the Way of the World, "Now I recollect, I wonder not they were weary of you. Last night was one of their cabal-nights. They have them three times a-week, and meet at each others apartments, like the coroner's inquest, to sit upon the murdered reputations of the week. You and I are excluded: and it was once proposed that all the male sex should be excepted. But somebody moved that, to avoid scandal, there might be one man of the community: upon which Witwoud and Petulant were enrolled members."

Were enrolled a member would have been a more proper expression. Let us suppose that this society had admitted men among them; each man would have been
looked

looked upon not as *two* members, but as *one* only. Consequently, having mentioned Witwoud and Petulant's being admitted, as making jointly but one *man*, there is an inconsistency in his calling them *two* members, and he ought to have said they were enrolled a *member*: by which expression likewise the humour would have been kept up.

LXIV. MUSSULMEN.

THIS word is used by many writers as the plural of *Mussulman*; which seems to be wrong. It is true we say *Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Irishmen, &c.* and not *Frenchmans, Dutchmans, Irishmans*, because *Frenchman, Dutchman, Irishman*, are compounded respectively of *French and man, Dutch and man, Irish and man*, and because *men* is the plural of *man*. But, as to the word *Mussulman*, though it may be a compound in the Arabic, (where, we are told, it signifies a *believer in the true religion*) yet, considered as an English word, it is not compounded, but simple: for we have no such word as *mussul* in the English tongue.

It is the same with the substantives *Ottoman* and *German*, which, considered as English words, are not compounded, whatever they may have been in the countries where they were coined. Accordingly we say *Ottomans* and *Germans* in the plural: and no one ever yet took it into his head to say *Ottomen* or *Germen*.

We ought in like manner, (as I should imagine) to say *Mussulmans* in the plural, and not *Mussulmen*.

LXV.

HE is more a soldier than a scholar. This is an expression, to which I imagine no exception will be made. But, as to the following, *he is a better soldier than a scholar*, though perhaps not one in a great many would find fault with it, it seems to me not perfectly to make sense. As the word *better* comes between *a* and *soldier*, I should think it best to leave out the *a* that precedes *scholar*, and to say *he is a better soldier than scholar*.

LXVI.

LXVI. AGREEABLE. SUITABLE. CONFORMABLE.
CONSISTENT.

THESE adjectives, with others much to the same purpose, are used improperly by the greatest part of our writers; for they frequently employ them as adverbs.

His performance was agreeable to his promise.—His conduct was suitable to the occasion—this makes sense.

He performed agreeably to his promise.—He conducted himself suitably to the occasion—this likewise makes sense.

But—He performed agreeable to his promise.—He conducted himself suitable to the occasion—this is nonsense.

The word *previous* likewise ought to be used only as an adjective, and never as an adverb. *He wrote to me previous to his coming to town* is not good English.

The proper expression is *He wrote to me previously to his coming to town.*

Tolerable before an adjective, or an adverb, (*tolerable good—tolerable well*) instead of *tolerably*, is a frequent impropriety.

Some writers employ the word *bad* as an adverb, and would not scruple to say *That was done very bad*: which is not English.

The word *ill*, it is true, is both an adjective and an adverb; but *bad* is only an adjective. The adverb is *badly*.

LXVII. SAFELY.

THE word *safely* is likewise (as I apprehend) improperly used by some authors.

I arrived here safely the 15th instant, says Mr. Molyneux in a letter to Mr. Locke.

This appears to me hardly to make sense. *Safely* signifies *with safety*, or *in a safe manner*. Now, if a man says that he arrived in a *safe* manner, he seems to suppose there is danger of some mischance in arriving. But what danger is there to be apprehended in the circumstance of arriving? The danger is only during the journey or voyage: in the arrival there is none at all. The proper way of speaking is, therefore, *I arrived safe*: that is, *having escaped all the dangers of the passage*.

LXVIII.

LXVIII. GOVERNMENT. ADMINISTRATION.

OUR news-writers have lately taken it into their heads to personify (as it were) our government, by using the words *government* and *administration* in the following manner. *The disputes between government (not the government) and the East-India Company.—Administration (not the administration) seems at a loss how to proceed in this business.*

This is an expression of great barbarity.

LXIX.

THIS produced such melancholy thoughts in me, says an author, *that, if they had continued, might have proved fatal to my health.*

Such *that*, where the word *that* is a pronoun, as it is here, makes bad English.

He might have said either *Such melancholy thoughts as, if they had continued, might have proved fatal to my health,* or, *such melancholy thoughts that, if they had continued, they might have proved fatal to my health.* Here the word *that* is an adverb.

LXX.

HERE, says another author, *are so many characters that the person of the emperor cannot well be mistaken, since not one of them agrees with any but Augustus Cæsar.*

We have many writers, who take this liberty of using a verb plural with a nominative case singular, where a genitive case plural intervenes.

There is no grace in this; and it is a needless, and a very ridiculous violation of grammar. The verb here being in the indicative, not in the subjunctive mood, (for in the third person singular of the present tense of the subjunctive mood our verbs have no *s*) the proper expression is *Not one of them agrees with any but Augustus Cæsar.*

LXXI.

LXXI.

HE printed a great number of authors, says the same writer, in such a manner as shew him to have been a very ingenious and learned man.

Here is an absurdity nearly a-kin to that just mentioned. It is not the word *authors*, but the word *manner*, that ought to determine the number of the verb. The proper way of speaking therefore is in such a manner as shews him to have been a very ingenious and learned man.

LXXII.

IT is customary at the playhouse, at the conclusion of the Beggar's Opera, if the same be intended to be acted again the next night, for one of the actors to advance, and say *To-morrow will be performed this opera again.*

He ought to say *this comedy*, not *this opera*: for, though *The Beggar's Opera* be the name of the piece, it is not an opera. It is a comedy written partly in ridicule of operas. How absurd would it be to speak of the dramatic piece called *The Tragedy of Tom Thumb* as of a real tragedy! It is not a tragedy, though the word *tragedy* make part of its name. The piece is comic. It is a farce written in ridicule of modern tragedy.

Swift speaks very properly of the Beggar's Opera at the beginning of the *third Intelligencer*, where he says *The players having now almost done with the comedy called THE BEGGAR'S OPERA for the season, &c.*

LXXIII. An improper Repetition of the Adverb THAT.

I EXPECTED that, when I told him the news, that he would be more surprized at it than he really was.

This is nonsense; and its being so is owing to the adverb's being twice used in the mention of one circumstance. The proper way of speaking is *I expected that, when I told him the news, he would be more surprized at it than he really was.*

The repetition of the adverb is allowable only where, after once using it, so many words intervene before the circumstance

circumstance is mentioned, to which it belongs, that it may be supposed the reader or hearer has so far forgotten it as not readily to perceive the connexion: in which case it is to be introduced the second time by the words that preceded it before; as, for instance,

I was in hopes that, as he had always expressed a great friendship for this now distressed family, as he is likewise immensely rich, and never was looked upon as a man of a narrow disposition, but, on the contrary, of a very liberal and compassionate one, of which he has given numberless proofs, (for seldom a week has passed but he has relieved some indigent person) I say I was in hopes, considering all this, that he would give the unfortunate family a very ample assistance.

Here it is not a different *that*, which is used. It is the same *that*, introduced by the same words as before.

LXXIV.

A VERY great absurdity, of which both the English and the French are continually guilty as well in writing as in speaking, is the making the pronoun relative *that* (or *which*, or *who*) singular, where it refers to a substantive plural, and where, consequently, it ought itself to be plural.

EXAMPLE.

He was one of those highwaymen, that was condemned last sessions.

This is false grammar, if the meaning be that several highwaymen were condemned last sessions, and that this man was one of them: for in that case the pronoun relative *that* refers to *highwaymen*, not to *he*; and we ought therefore to say *he was one of those highwaymen, that were condemned last sessions*. A transposition of the words will make it plain that the word *that* refers to highwaymen. For instance, *Of those highwaymen, that were condemned last sessions, he was one*.

But the expression, if taken in another sense, is good grammar.

Suppose a company to be talking of a gang of highwaymen, and that one of this company has a mind to say that a certain highwayman, condemned last sessions, belonged to that gang. Here this person may say *He was one of those highwaymen, that was condemned last sessions*; be-

D

cause

cause the word *that* refers upon this occasion not to *highwaymen*, but to *he*; and the meaning is, *he, that was condemned last sessions, was one of those highwaymen*. But this last way of speaking, viz. *he, that was condemned last sessions, was one of those highwaymen*, is the best, because it is impossible to be misunderstood.

One would think these distinctions very easy to make: and yet there are few authors, either English or French, that make them: and it is amazing to see what blunders and false grammar many even of the best writers of the two nations are herein guilty of.

LXXV. NO OTHER BESIDES. NO OTHER EXCEPT.
NO OTHER BUT.

THESE expressions are frequently made use of, where they do not make the sense intended.

If I ask a friend what visits he has received to-day, and he would signify that Mr. *A* is the only person that has visited him, he may say *No person besides Mr. A has visited me*, or *no other person than Mr. A has visited me*. But to say *no other person besides Mr. A has visited me*, would be wrong, because it would seem as if somebody else had been mentioned before the mention of Mr. *A*.

Where the words *no other* have a reference, this expression may be right.

If I say *Mr. A and Mr. B have called on me to-day: but no other person has come into my room, besides my taylor; (or excepting my taylor) herein there is nothing improper*. The words *no other* have here a meaning; whereas in the former instance they have none. They signify *no other person than Mr. A and Mr. B*.

In poetry, the sort of expression here condemned seems sometimes to give a force which would otherwise be wanting. When that is the case, it may be allowed.

LXXVI. WONDERED.

INSTEAD of *Those things were much wondered at*.—*That circumstance was much wondered at*—many writers would say *those things were much wondered*—*that circumstance was much wondered*—omitting the *at*. This is not English: for we do not say *to wonder a thing*, but *to wonder at a thing*.
I am

I am not sure that, where the circumstance which raises the wonder is mentioned after the word *wondered*, and that word is preceded by the unrelative pronoun *it*, the *as* may not either be used or omitted. For instance, *It was wondered that he should marry so late in life.—It was wondered at that he should marry so late in life.* At least, there are many writers who omit it; which, I believe, however, I should myself not venture to do.

LXXVII. RELATIVE.

THIS word is often used adverbially by incorrect writers. *He was interrogated relative to that circumstance.—We discoursed a great while relative to what you have just mentioned.*

This is not good English. The proper expressions are *relatively to*, and *in relation to*.—*He was interrogated relatively to (or in relation to) that circumstance.—We discoursed a great while relatively to (or in relation to) what you have just mentioned.*

Relative to is to be used only where there is a substantive, with which *relative*, an adjective, agrees. For instance, *the hint he gave me was relative to that affair.* Here *relative* is an adjective agreeing with the substantive *hint*; and *to* is a preposition to the substantive *affair*.

LXXVIII.

OUR translators from the French tongue, where they meet with the words *Huit jours—quinze jours*—are apt to render them literally *eight days—fifteen days*.

The French say *eight days* and *fifteen days*, where an Englishman would say *a week—a fortnight*; for they bring both the first and the last day into the account. *Huit jours—quinze jours*—ought therefore to be translated *a week—a fortnight*. To use a French expression in writing English is wrong.

I have often wondered that the ingenious author of the *Rambler* (who without doubt is well versed in the French tongue, and who has a remarkable fluency and copiousness of expression in the English) should tell us that some French writer asserts there are few people, who know how

to take a walk. I know not what French writer this is; but his words, in all probability, are either *peu de gens savent se promener*, or *peu de gens savent faire une promenade*. The words *se promener*, though they signify what an Englishman calls *taking a walk*, have a much more extensive signification than this English expression. They mean likewise *to go out upon a little party of pleasure*, whether on foot, on horseback, or in a carriage. Sometimes they signify *to go leisurely*. *Nous reviendrons en nous promenant* says Lewis XIV. in a billet to Madame Maintenon; as much as to say *We will come back without hurrying, and will travel only such a pace as will make our returning an amusement to us*.

As to the French writer mentioned by the Rambler, I should imagine his meaning to be that few people are properly qualified to make themselves agreeable in any little jaunt of pleasure; which observation is very just; there being not one in a great many, who has the complaisance of temper, the cheerfulness, and the talent of making amusing remarks upon any thing that falls under the notice of the company, which seem to be all necessary in such jaunts.

LXXIX.

A common fault in our writers is the making the pronouns *that* and *which* at the same time nominative and accusative; as, for instance, *The venison, which I received yesterday out of the country, and was a present from a friend*.

There is a barbarism in this expression; and it must hurt every person that has any delicacy of apprehension. It is necessary to repeat the word *which* before *was*, and to say *The venison, which I received yesterday out of the country, and which was a present from a friend*. In *which I received* the *which* is in the accusative case. In *which was a present* it is in the nominative.

This fault is frequent in Swift, whose style is far from being so excellent as it is often asserted to be. In some parts of his works it is exceedingly good; but in many others it is flat, low, and shamefully incorrect.

I have

I have often wondered at grammarians' asserting (as they sometimes do) that nouns have no cases in the modern languages. *The word CASUS, say they, which signifies A CASE, is derived from CADERE, TO FALL. Consequently nouns, that do not change their termination, have no cases.* But this is only saying that a noun, that never varies in its termination, never varies in its termination.

According to this account, the Latin word *nihil* has no cases; and the words *felice* and *felici*, which are both used in what we call the ablative case singular of *felix*, are, in reality, of different cases, as well as the words *bonus, bona, bonum*, which we say are all in the nominative.

I would ask these grammarians upon what account the Greeks and Romans made their nouns vary in their termination. No doubt it was because they felt that a noun raised different ideas in their minds, according to the place it occupied. Being placed before a verb, and *governing*, as we call it, that verb, it appeared in a different light from that in which it appeared in what we call the accusative case, where it is, as we say, *governed by it*.

If this were their inducement (and I do not see what other inducement they could have), it is not the termination that makes the case, but it is the view, in which the word appears, that makes it: and different terminations were invented to express, in some measure, the different views in which nouns shew themselves. I say *in some measure*; for it would have been endless to invent different terminations for *all* the different views, in which a noun is capable of presenting itself to the imagination.

Now, considering the thing in this light, we must conclude that nouns have as many cases in one language as in another; that it is impossible to say how many cases, or *situations, or points of view*, there really are; and that the difference between the Greek and Latin on the one hand, and the modern languages on the other, is only this, viz. that in the former there is an endeavour to shew those *points of view* by different terminations, and in the latter by the use of prepositions.

It did not occur to me, till since the first edition of these Remarks, that, agreeably with my notion of its not being the termination of the word that makes the case of a noun, but the *point of view* in which the word appears, the

compilers of the Latin grammar, considering verbs in the same light, have made three different moods [the subjunctive, the optative, and the potential], in all which three the words are still the same.

This reminds me, further, of a certain particularity in the French language. Participles masculine active admit an accusative case, or any other word, immediately after them; as, for instance, *Cet homme aimant cette femme comme il faisoit*—(that man loving that woman to the degree he did.)—*Cet officier croyant la bataille gagnée*—(that officer supposing the battle gained). But the feminine participle (according to French grammarians) does not. *Cette femme aimante cet homme comme elle faisoit*, to signify that woman loving that man to the degree she did, would not be French. The mute *e*, the last letter of the word *aimante*, is suppressed; and the universal way of speaking is, *cette femme aimant cet homme comme elle faisoit*. “This word “*aimant*,” would these grammarians say, “is here a gerund; and gerunds are undeclined, and end always with “the same letter.”

Now these grammarians may assert as they please that the word is a gerund. Its *sense* is absolutely that of a participle. The word is therefore a participle, let them call it what they will; it being, as I have said, the *sense* of the word, and not its *termination*, that determines it to be this or that part of speech.

LXXX. THE REASON IS BECAUSE, &c.

THIS expression does not make sense.

The reason of my desiring to see you was because I wanted to talk with you on such an affair.—The reason of his going to live in the country is because he has bad health.

This expression, I say again, is nonsense; and it amazes me that our writers do not perceive it. But, in short, they do not; and there are scarcely any, even of our greatest authors, that avoid this way of speaking.

Let us put *by reason* in the room of *because*.—*By reason*, to signify *because*, is indeed a low expression. However, it is English.

The reason of my desiring to see you was by reason I wanted to talk with you on such an affair.—The reason of his going to live in the country is by reason he has bad health.

Can

Can any thing be more glaring than the nonsense of this expression?

The proper ways of speaking are, *The reason of my desiring to see you was that I wanted to talk with you on such an affair.*—*The reason of my desiring to see you was my wanting to talk with you on such an affair.*—*The reason of his going to live in the country is that he has bad health.*—*The reason of his going to live in the country is his having bad health.*

The reason is on account of is as bad as *the reason is because*.

LXXXI.

“HE was admirably formed for poetry; and in the year 1671 he had a fair opportunity of displaying his talents in that way. It was on occasion of the prize of poetry founded by the members of the French academy; the subject of which at this time was on the suppressing of duelling by Lewis XIV.” *Biographical Dictionary.*

To say *The subject of it was on the suppressing of duelling* is talking as improperly as it would be to say *On the suppressing of duelling was the subject of it.* The proper expression would have been *The subject of which was the suppressing of duelling, without the on.*

LXXXII.

“SUPPOSE I were to say that to every art there was a system of such various and well-approved principles.”

Harris, the Author of Hermes.

“If all the objections to Newton’s system were answered, if the facts and calculations were over and over confirmed, a disciple of Leibnitz would still maintain that there was no sufficient reason for attraction as an essential property, or as an attribute, of matter.” *Lord Bolingbroke.*

This is the common way of speaking; but, in my opinion, not the most rational one.

That to every art there is a system, and that there is no sufficient reason for attraction, would be much better expressions, as I should imagine, than *to every art there was a system, and there was no sufficient reason for attraction.*

It

It is true the word *were* in *suppose I were to say*, and in *if all the objections were answered*, is in what we call the preter-imperfect tense of the subjunctive mood; for which reason many will say the verb in the indicative mood, which follows, ought to be in the preter-imperfect likewise. But, though this word be in that tense, yet, in regard to its *sense*, it has nothing to do with the time past; and therefore the following it with a verb in the preter-imperfect in the *indicative*, which *does* regard the time past, is improper, notwithstanding its being the common way of speaking.

If an atheist would well consider the arguments in this book, he would confess there was a God.—If an atheist would well consider the arguments in this book, he would confess there is a God.

Though most people would make use of the former, the latter of these is the best expression, the existence of a GOD being spoken of as a thing permanent.

Nay, even though the verb were preceded by a verb in the *indicative* mood, this way of speaking would still be the best. For instance, *an atheist, upon reading this book, confesses there is a God*, is not only a more elegant, but a more proper, expression than *an atheist, upon reading this book, confesses there was a God*; because we are not to suppose that this man imagined there was a God just at that time only, but that he looked upon him as a permanent being, existing likewise in future.

For a similar reason *is* would be a better word than *was* in the passages quoted above from Harris and Lord Bolingbroke.

I will subjoin another case.

Suppose I meet accidentally in London a man who robbed me lately upon the road. Which would be the most proper expression for me to use, *this was the man*, or *this is the man, that robbed me*? Most people, I imagine, would say *this was the man*. But *this is the man* is the properest expression: for, though the robbery, which is a past transaction, ought to be mentioned in a past tense, the identity of the man, who still continues the same, is with more propriety spoken of in the present tense.

LXXXIII.

"I WAS much delighted with a person, who hath a great estate in this kingdom, upon his complaints to me how grievously poor England suffers by importations from Ireland: that we convey our wool to France, in spite of all the harpies at the Custom-house: that Mr. Shuttleworth, and others on the Cheshire coast, are such fools to sell us their bark at a good price, for tanning our own hides into leather: with other enormities of the like kind." *Swift.*
 "Those among them who were so unfortunate to have had their birth and education in this country."

In the same Discourse.

To say *such fools to sell us their bark* and so unfortunate to have had their birth, &c. though it be a way of speaking used by many people, and even by esteemed writers, is not talking strictly good English. He ought to have said *such fools as to sell us their bark.*—So unfortunate as to have had their birth and education in this country.

The omission of the *as* ought to be left to poetry, where an ungrammatical conciseness often gives a spirit, which more than compensates for the neglect of grammar.

LXXXIV. PAINS.

SOME writers use a verb singular with the substantive *pains*, where that substantive is employed figuratively. For example; *He took great pains in that affair: but his pains was ill rewarded.*

I think this has no grace, and that it would be much better to say *His pains were ill rewarded.*

LXXXV. ANGUISHING.

MR. Molyneux, in one of his letters to Mr. Locke, has the following period. *It is an anguishing thought to me that you should be subject to the common frailties and fate of mankind.*

Anguishing is perhaps a word of his own coining: for I do not remember to have seen it in any other writer. But I think it very expressive, and should be pleased to see it adopted.

LXXXVI.

LXXXVI. DARE.

NUMBERS of people, though they use the *s* in the third person singular of the present tense of the indicative mood of other verbs, omit it in that of the verb *to dare*, and would say *he dare not do it*, instead of *he dares not*. Many authors do the same. The expression is indeed so common that it seems rather too bold to affirm it not to be English. Yet I confess I see no grace in it; and the using it appears to me to give a person an air of illiterateness.

LXXXVII.

OUR English writers very frequently, by the wrong placing a word, either annihilate sense, or give a sense different from what they intend.

"The Celtiberi of Spain borrowed that name from the Celtæ & Iberi, from whom they were jointly descended." *Moyle.*

The proper expression here would have been *from whom jointly they were descended*. This would have signified that the *Celtæ* and the *Iberi* were jointly the progenitors of the *Celtiberi*; which is the author's meaning: whereas, placing the word *jointly* as he does, he gives the reader a confused idea of a descent common to the *Celtiberi* and to some other people.

LXXXVIII. OUR'N, YOUR'N, HIS'N.

INFINITE numbers of the low people in the country (and not a few in London) instead of *his*, *her's*, *our's*, *your's*, *their's*, say *his'n*, *her'n*, *our'n*, *your'n*, *their'n*.

I had not taken notice of this, but that even persons of education are often guilty of the same. I would advise them likewise, in imitation of many of those low people, to say *housen* instead of *houses*.

LXXXIX. *The Active and the Passive improperly introduced together.*

THE effects of it, says an author, speaking of perspective, are not better explained by Leonard da Vinci than Plato
has

has done in his Dialogue of the Sophist. This does not make sense. The author might have said *The effects of it are not better explained by Leonard da Vinci than Plato has explained them in his Dialogue of the Sophist, or than they are explained by Plato in his Dialogue of the Sophist.*

There are perhaps many people, who would feel the impropriety of his expression, without immediately perceiving to what it is owing.

The absurdity lies here. *Plato has done* is active. *The effects of it are not better explained* is passive. When he says *Plato has done*, he means *has explained it*. This *has explained* is active. The *are explained* above is (as I have just now said) passive. Now he uses the two *explaineds* as words of the same signification; which, one being passive, and the other active, they cannot be. And this it is that makes his expression nonsense.

It is a mortification to me to have observed that this sort of barbarism is not unfrequent in even *good* English writers, while the very worst of the French are hardly ever guilty of it.

Here follow two quotations, in each of which there is a fault of the same kind with that mentioned above.

“Yonder comes the man we are speaking of, your friend Theodorus. I should be glad to be introduced to him.—That, said Agoretes, I undertake very frankly to do.” *Fordyce’s Art of Preaching.*

“All that can now be decently urged is the reason of the thing: and this I shall do, more for the sake of that truly venerable body than my own.”

Dr. Warburton’s Preface to Shakespeare.

What is it that Agoretes undertakes to do? The meaning (as we may guess) is that he will introduce the other to Theodorus. But it is not properly expressed; the words *to do*, which are active, referring to the words *to be introduced*, which are passive. This certainly does not make sense.

The same objection lies to the passage from Dr. Warburton.

XC. *The Words BOTH and OR improperly used together.*

THEY are under the same predicament, says an author. They are alike men both as to affection or weakness.

This

This does not make sense, *Or* would have been proper after the adverb *either*: but the adverb *both* required an *and* to follow it. For instance, *They are alike men either as to affection or weakness.—They are alike men, both as to affection and weakness.*

XCI.

SWIFT, where he enumerates the causes of a country's flourishing, writes in the following manner.

"The first cause of a kingdom's thriving is the fruitfulness of the soil, &c.—The second is the industry of the people in working up, &c.—The sixth is by being governed only by laws made with their own consent.—The seventh is by improvement of land.—The tenth is by disposing of all offices of honour, profit, or trust, only to the natives."

One of the causes is the doing thus, or thus, is a very proper expression. But to say *One of the causes is by doing thus, or thus, or* (which is the same thing), *by doing thus, or thus, is one of the causes*, is not talking sense.

He ought to have said *The sixth is the being governed only by laws made with their own consent. The seventh is the improvement of land. The tenth is the disposing of all offices of honour, profit, or trust, only to the natives.*

This absurd mode of expression is very common with our English writers. Here follows another instance of it, that I have just met with.

"To this overture the count made no other answer than by a low bow."

Translation of Keyser's Travels.

This is wrong. The translator might have said either, *To this overture the count made answer no otherwise than by a low bow—or, (omitting the word by) to this overture the count made no other answer than a low bow.*

He made answer by a low bow is sense.—*A low bow is the answer he made*, is likewise sense.

But to say *by a low bow was the answer he made, or he made no other answer than by a low bow*, making thus the word *by* a part of the nominative or accusative case, is talking nonsense.

XCII.

XCII. *Two Nominatives with a Verb singular.*

"WHEN you are acting towards them in consequence of what your justice and honour requires."

Translation of Cicero's Letters, by Melmoth.

A verb singular with two nominative cases singular may perhaps be allowed, where those nominatives have the same, or very nearly the same, signification: but not else. This is therefore bad English; and the proper expression would have been *in consequence of what your justice and honour require.*

The same translation has the following period.

" 'Tis true, into whatever part of the world he might be cast, he must still retain the same bitter sensibility of that ruin, in which both himself and his country is involved."

There is here no pretence for the use of a verb singular; and the translator ought to have written *in which both himself and his country are involved.*

This affectation of deviating from the rules of grammar merely for the sake of deviating from them, and where a freedom of expression does not require it, is very wrong. Why was grammar invented, but that, for want of it, men were unable to convey their thoughts to each other in a clear and distinct manner? This was undoubtedly the reason. And so far are we from being overburdened with rules of grammar, that, on the contrary, we are often unintelligible for want of a greater number of them. If we neglect those we have already, we shall come, in time, to understand one another no better than our ancestors did before the language was brought into any form.

XCIII. ANTECEDENT.

WE have several writers, who employ this word ungrammatically.

"This is evident from a letter to Atticus, written about four years antecedent to the fact, of which I am speaking."

Notes on Cicero's Letters.

Though these four years were antecedent to the fact, the expression of *written about four years antecedent to the fact*

fact is not proper: for *antecedent*, when thus joined with *written*, is used adverbially. But *antecedent* is not an adverb.

Written antecedently to the fact by about four years would have been good English: and, if the translator had disliked the adverb, another turn might have been given to the period, and the word *written* might either have been placed immediately after *letter*, or have been omitted. For example, *This is evident from a letter written to Atticus, about four years antecedent to the fact, of which I am speaking.*—*This is evident from a letter to Atticus, about four years antecedent to the fact, of which I am speaking.*

Here *antecedent* agrees with the substantive *letter*, which it cannot do, when joined, as above, with the word *written*: and, if you suppose it to agree with *years*, the words convey no idea of any particular point of time. *Prior* would have been, however, a better word than *antecedent*, as an adjective to *letter*.

XCIV. YOU and THOU employed together.

“SHOULD fortune continue to persecute me, will you,
“thou dear, unhappy woman, will you fondly throw away,
“in gaining friends to a desperate cause, the last scanty
“remains of your desperate fortunes?” *Cicero’s Letters.*

The using *you* and *thou* in the same period (and more especially so very near together) is an unnatural way of writing. And yet we have many authors guilty of it. Pope is not a little faulty in this particular.

XCv. EVERY ONE made plural.

“I SHALL very zealously persevere in my applications
“not only to Cæsar, but to all those who are most in his
“favour, every one of whom I have experienced to be
“much my friends.” *Ibid.*

Though *every one* be a noun of number, it has no grace used as a plural; and the translator ought to have said *Every one of whom I have experienced to be much my friend.*

The translator says, in another part of the same letter, *They are every one of them my friends.* Here the substantive is rightly put in the plural number; and it would have been improper to say *they are every one of them my friend.* But it is to be considered that in this place the words *my friends*

friends belong to the words *they are*; which makes the expression of *they are my friends*. As to the words *every one of them*, they stand by themselves, and ought to be included between two commas. They are brought in (as one may say) by way of explication. When, therefore, a man says *they are, every one of them, my friends*, it is as though he said *they are my friends. I speak not of some of them only, but of all.*

XCVI.

“EXCEPTING Orpheus, there is none of them that have any great claim to this favour.” *Ibid.*

The verb singular *is* and the verb plural *have*, introduced thus together, make a confusion. The translator ought to have said either *there are none of them that have any great claim*, or *there is no one of them that has any great claim*.

XCVII. MUCH LESS.

THIS expression is often used where it is not proper.

“Tell me whether I can, with a good grace, ask him to allow me even the least time for the payment of this money; much less above a year.” *Ibid.*

Much less above a year does not here make sense. *More especially above a year* would have been the proper expression.

Had the writer put a full stop at the word *money*, and ceased there to propose a question, and had afterwards spoken positively, *much less* might have been used. For example, *Tell me whether I can, with a good grace, ask him to allow me even the least time for the payment of this money. Much less can I ask of him above a year.*

The reader will observe that there is no note of interrogation at *year*; and that the words are therefore an affirmation, and not a question.

XCVIII.

“HE acquitted himself so much to my satisfaction that I had reason to think I received, instead of bestowed, a favour, when I nominated him to that employment.” *Ibid.*

The translator, I conceive, wrote *bestowed*, as judging that the word ought to be in the same mood and tense with *received*, to which it stands in opposition. But I believe every discerning person, who takes the least time to consider, will find that this word cannot properly be made use of with *instead*, and that *instead of bestowed* hardly makes sense.

With *instead*, *bestowing* is the proper word. On the other hand, if we say *bestowed*, the word ought to be accompanied by the adverb *not*. As, for example, *He acquitted himself so much to my satisfaction that I had reason to think I received, instead of bestowing, a favour, when I nominated him to that employment.—He acquitted himself so much to my satisfaction that I had reason to think I received, and not that I bestowed, a favour, when I nominated him to that employment.*

This mistake of the translator reminds me of a certain impropriety very common among us both in speaking and writing. Many people (I believe, indeed, the greatest part) would express themselves in this manner.—*He has not work'd this afternoon. He has done nothing but play'd.*

This is wrong. The proper expression is *He has done nothing but play*. This word *play* is here in the infinitive mood; and it is as though we said *to play is the only thing that he has done*; which makes sense; whereas *play'd* is the only thing that he has done is nonsense.

An infinitive mood may supply the place of a noun substantive: but a verb in another mood cannot.

XCIX. DIFFERENT THAN.

“I FOUND your affairs had been managed in a different manner than what I advised.” *Ibid.*

A different manner than is not English. We say *different to*, and *different from*; to the last of which expressions I have in another place given the preference, as making the best sense.

C. Omission of a Preposition.

“HIS compliance can by no means be considered in the favourable light which he here represents it.” *Ibid.*

This

This is a very bad, though a very common, way of writing. The translator ought to have repeated the preposition *in*, (for the imagination of the reader cannot supply it without pain) and to have said *His compliance can by no means be considered in the favourable light, in which he here represents it.*

CI.

“I NEVER expect to reap any advantage from my labours of this kind.” *Ibid.*

Cicero speaking here of what he at the time of his writing supposed would be the consequence of those labours, the proper expression would have been *I do not expect ever to reap any advantage from my labours of this kind, or I have no expectation of ever reaping any advantage from my labours of this kind.*

There is a difference between the *never expecting to receive* and the *not expecting ever to receive*.

If I say *I often do that man kindnesses; but I never expect him to make any return*, the meaning is that I, at the time of my doing those kindnesses, have no expectation that the man will, at any future time, make a return.

But, if I say *I often do that man kindnesses; but I do not expect him ever to make a return*, the meaning may be that I, at the time of my speaking, have no expectation that the man will ever make a return.

CII.

“I wonder that such a valiant hero as you should trifle away your time in making war upon women.”

Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope.

This is wrongly expressed. It is the substantive *hero*, not the substantive *you*, which ought to determine the person of the pronoun, that serves as an adjective to *time*. The writer should therefore have said *I wonder that such a valiant hero as you should trifle away his time in making war upon women.*

CIII.

“**H**E is the author of two works of a very different character.”

This, which I think I took from the Biographical Dictionary, would be a proper expression, had the writer been just mentioning some other work, and had these two works, now spoken of, been of the same character one with another, because *two works of a different character* would then signify *two works of a character different from the character of the work already mentioned*.

But this is not the case. He has not been speaking of any other work: and his meaning is that these two are very different from each other. He ought therefore either to have said *of very different characters* (which would have expressed his meaning), or to have used the singular number without the *a*, and have said *of very different character*; which would have had the same signification. Of these two expressions the last is the most elegant.

I well know that the expression *a different* (or *a very different*) is often employed in the manner which I here condemn; and I am not sure that any even of our best writers take care to avoid it. But, whatever authority it may plead, it is not a clear expression; and, therefore, I can never think it right.

CIV.

WE have a certain strange barbarism in our tongue, which in all probability will never be banished.

The *s* with an apostrophe, which occurs so frequently at the end of substantives, is a contraction of *his*. Instead of saying *The house of that man, the horse of that man, &c.* we say, *that man's house, that man's horse*; which expressions are contractions of *that man his house, that man his horse*.

One would imagine then that, in speaking of what belongs to a woman, we should use the word *her*; and, in speaking of what belongs to several persons, the word *their*. And yet the *s*, the contraction of *his*, is used even in these cases; and, instead of *That woman her estate, those men their properties*, we say *that woman's estate, those men's properties*;

properties; which are contractions of *That woman her estate, those men his properties*. This is certainly, as I have said, a strange barbarism.

It is necessary to observe that, to mark the elision after a plural number, where, for the avoiding the disagreeable repetition of the sound of the letter *s*, not the *hi* only, but the whole word *his* is cut off, the apostrophe ought to be put not between the two last letters of this plural number, but at the end of it.

For instance, *The English kings' palaces*; which signifies *the palaces of the English kings*. Here the apostrophe is put where the whole word *his* is omitted; for the expression at full length would be *the English kings his palaces*.

This is what few people observe. Ninety-nine in a hundred would write the *the English king's palaces*. But this expression would not give their meaning: for *the English king's palaces* does not signify *the palaces of the English kings*: it signifies *the palaces of the English king*.

This observation has nothing to do with plurals that do not end with the letter *s*, as *men, women, &c.*

CV.

“THE seeming importance given to every part of female dress, each of which is committed to the care and protection of a different Sylph, with all the solemnity, &c.”

Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope.

The word *each* does not make sense where it refers only to one noun singular. Now it refers here only to *every part*; and *every part* is singular.

Neither can I think *different* a proper word in this place; and that for the same reason which I have given in the last observation but one. If I say *a different Sylph*, when no other *Sylph* either is or has been mentioned, I cannot see that the word *different* has any meaning.

A word implying *separate, distinct, particular*, would have been more proper; and the author might have written in the following manner:—*The seeming importance given to all the parts of female dress, each of which is committed to the care and protection of a separate (or of a particular, or of a several) Sylph, with all the solemnity, &c.*

The

The word *separate*, which may here appear a little stiff, would no longer appear so, if it once began to be used in the places where I have said I think the word *different* improper: and I should imagine the sense of it must be owned to be just.

CVI.

“THE wounds inflicted are suitable to the nature of each different instrument said to inflict them.” *Ibid.*

The words *each* and *different*, just now disapproved of, as being severally improperly employed, are here brought in together in such a manner as makes something of a confusion of sense. Either of them might have been introduced singly: but *different* must have been made a plural, and *each* must have referred to *wounds*, and not have been made an adjective to *instrument*: as, for instance, *The wounds inflicted are suitable to the nature of the different instruments said to inflict them.—The wounds inflicted are suitable, each to the nature of the particular instrument said to inflict it.*

It is to me unaccountable that writers should make this word *each* of the plural number, where it refers to single objects. One would imagine that even the smallest degree of understanding should inform them it is singular. In making it plural, they make it synonymous either with *both*, or with the plural of *all*: whereas it signifies *every one, singly considered.*

“Each of these experiments,” says a book that lies before me, “have something peculiar to them.”

“Thirteen of these unfortunate rivals,” says the translator of Cicero’s Letters, “entered the list; and each of them in their turn paid the forfeiture of their lives.”

These writers ought to have said, *Each of these experiments has something peculiar to it.—Thirteen of these unfortunate rivals entered the list; and each of them in his turn paid the forfeiture of his life.*

CVII. IT IS EQUALLY THE SAME.

THIS expression, so frequently in the mouths of the lower people, who mean by it *It is the same*, or *it is all one*, would not be worth mentioning, if it did not sometimes escape their betters. As

As it is used, it is nonsense: for the word *equally* ought to refer to something; whereas, 'as these people use it, it is made to refer to nothing.

CVIII.

THE word *both*, of the improper use of which I have already spoken, is frequently brought in with *equal* or *equally* in an absurd manner. For instance, *Those two men are both equal in capacity.*—*Those two men are both equally ambitious.*

A and B are equal in capacity is sense. This means that they are equal to each other.

A and B are both equal in capacity to C is likewise sense. It signifies that A is equal to C, and that B is likewise equal to C, in capacity.

But, if I say simply that A and B are both equal in capacity, I talk nonsense: for these words signify only that A is equal in capacity, and that B is likewise equal in capacity, without implying to whom. So that the word *equal* has nothing to which it refers.

We have numbers of authors (and some of them very good ones) who do not attend to this.

CIX.

“IT is generally allowed that the author of the Discourse of Free-thinking, and of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion was one and the same.”

Preface to the Divine Legation.

I think this ill expressed. When the writer says *The author of the Discourse of Free-thinking, and of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, the very words seem to suppose these two works to be produced by one man. And what wonder is it that this one man should be one and the same?

The word *author* ought to have been repeated, and the verb should have been in the plural number. For instance, *It is generally allowed that the author of the Discourse of Free-thinking, and the author of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion were one and the same.*

Faults of this sort are very common in English writers.

CX.

NOTWITHSTANDING (as has been already observed) there is not a more common fault in speaking than the using the verb *to lay* instead of *to lie*, while we scarcely ever hear the word *lie* where *lay* would be proper; there are some few writers, who are guilty of saying *have lain*, (which is a preter-perfect of *to lie*) where they ought to say *have laid*, a preter-perfect of *to lay*.

Among others, Bluet has this expression in his very sensible (though little known) answer to Mandeville's Fable of the Bees.—“The restraints,” says he, “that education, custom and decency have lain them under,” &c. —and, in another place, “after they have lain aside all pretences to it.” This is not good English. He ought to have used the word *laid*, and not *lain*; for *lain* is the participle of *lie*. We do not say *to lie people under restraints*, or *to lie aside pretences*; but *to lay people under restraints*, and *to lay aside pretences*..

CXI. EN PASSANT.

INSTEAD of *en passant*, my Lord Shaftesbury makes use of the English words, *in passing*. Herein I think he is right. The expression of *in passing*, or *in passing along*, is perfectly intelligible, and very easy. We have, therefore, no need of the French words.

It would indeed be well if foreign words could be entirely banished. The use of them has something in it unnatural, and gives the language, into which they are dragged, an air of poverty. Where we want a word in our own tongue, to express any particular idea, we ought either to take a foreign word, and give it an English form, and an English pronunciation, (as we have already done in many instances) or to invent a word ourselves.

CXII.

THE adverbs *neither* and *nor* are not to be used with the adverb *not*, and the adjective *no*.

I have received no letter, neither from him, nor from his brother.—*I have not heard any news, neither of him, nor of his brother.*

This

This is wrong. The proper way of speaking is, *I have received no letter, either from him, or from his brother.— I have not heard any news, either of him, or of his brother.*

This is, as I have said, the correct way of speaking. But we ought not to resolve never to deviate from it. In very animated speeches, where a man were delivering himself with vehemence and heat, *neither* and *nor*, as having a more forcible sound than *either* and *or*, might perhaps be used not with an ill grace.

CXIII. ON. OF.

THE latter of these words is frequently used where I should imagine the former to be preferable. *On a sudden*, and *to send on an errand*, appear to me much better than *of a sudden*, and *to send of an errand*.

I should likewise think *It happened on such a day* much more proper than *it happened of such a day*.

We commonly say *To fall foul of* (and not *to fall foul on*) a person. Yet we have some writers, who say *to fall foul on*: and it seems to make better sense than *to fall foul of*. It were therefore to be wished it were brought into use.

CXIV.

“*HIS* health beginning to decline,” says the new Biographical Dictionary; “he was no longer able to go through business with that vigour and zeal as he wished.”

That vigour and zeal as he wished is not English: for *as* is not to be used in this manner with the pronoun *that*. It may be used with *such*, or with *so much*, or *so great*.

For instance, *He was no longer able to go through business with such vigour and zeal as he wished—with so much vigour and zeal as he wished—with so great a vigour and zeal as he wished.*

The vigour and zeal as he wished would likewise be bad English.

CXV.

THE same performance, speaking of one König, says “He was extremely deaf some years before he died.”

If he became deaf several years before he died, and his deafness continued during those several years, (as seems to have been the case) it would have been better to say *He was deaf for some years before he died.* The word *for* would have made it clear that his deafness continued; whereas we may say that a man was deaf some years before he died, if he became so several years before his death, and, after some time, recovered his hearing.

These seeming minuties are by no means to be despised, since they contribute to the intelligibleness of language.

CXVI. SORTS.

THIS plural is often improperly used, not only in common discourse, but by many of our writers, instead of the singular, *sort*.

If I see a large number of swords packed up for exportation, it would be wrong in me to say *There will be a considerable profit upon these swords; for these sorts of goods sell well where they are going:* for, though these swords are so many different objects, they make but one sort of goods. I ought therefore to say *this sort of goods sells,* and not *these sorts of goods sell.*

CXVII.

WE have instances in our tongue of verbs in the third person without a nominative case.

Though he commends her upon the whole, he censures her so far as regards her conduct in that particular affair.

This is certainly good English, notwithstanding the word *regards* have no nominative.

But these verbs without a nominative ought, as I apprehend, to be always in the singular number.

"The preface," says the Monthly Reviewer, "contains some general observations on military matters, so far as concern a militia."

I cannot allow this to be English. He certainly ought to have said *so far as concerns a militia:* for neither the plural substantive *observations*, nor the plural substantive *matters* has any thing to do in determining the number of this verb.

CXVIII.

CXVIII.

THERE are numberless instances, even in writers not despicable in point of sense, of the gross violation of grammar of joining participles with verbs by the copulative *and*. For example; *He began now to live in a different manner; the estate, that was fallen to him, setting him at his ease, and made him very happy.*

Here the word *and* joins the participle *setting* and the verb *made*.

CXIX.

"*I* *N* him," says some author, "were happily blended true dignity with softness of manners."

This way of speaking, where a noun singular is made a nominative to a verb plural, when such noun is followed by one or more nouns preceded by the preposition *with*, is very common both in English and in French; and it must be owned that, in many places, it appears easy and natural. But, in many others, there is an uncouthness in it, the violation of grammar being too palpable; and it requires some delicacy of ear, to judge where it is allowable, and where not. In the instance here brought, I think it somewhat offensive; and I would rather have said *In him was happily blended true dignity with softness of manners*; or, *in him true dignity was happily blended with softness of manners*; or, *in him were happily blended true dignity and softness of manners*.

CXX.

"*T* *H* *E* *Y* are so far from promoting real trade that the support of themselves and families are a dead weight on its profits."

Monthly Reviewer.

I have already spoken of the employing a verb plural with a nominative case singular, on account of the intervening of a genitive case plural between the two words, and have condemned the practice, it giving the sentence a very unnatural sound. These writers are here guilty of it, in saying *the support are a dead weight*.

But there is another fault in these lines.—*Of themselves and families, for of themselves and their families*, is very bad expression.

expression, though very common. It is mere shopkeepers' cant. (*Harris and son, Clarke and son, Brown and son*) and will always sound contemptible in the ears of persons of any taste.

CXXI SCARCELY.

"Is there a man scarcely to be found of a temper so truly mortified as to acquiesce in the lowest and shortest necessities of life?" Harris.

This is a French expression; but not an English one, though used by many of our writers. At least it is not an English expression in the sense, which it is here intended to convey. In another sense it is properly used in English.

The author, as the tenor of his discourse shews, is of opinion that a man so thoroughly mortified can scarcely be found. But, whatever a Frenchman might do, an Englishman would not use such an interrogatory, to express this opinion. He would say either *Is it easy to find? or is it not very difficult? or is it not almost impossible to find such a man?* These are, I say, the interrogatories an Englishman would use, to signify that he supposes such a man can hardly be found.

On the other hand, if he were of a contrary opinion, and thought it not a very difficult matter to find such a man, he would, upon hearing another talk of the great difficulty of it, naturally say, *is there then scarcely to be found a man so mortified?* which would imply that, for his part, he did not think it so very difficult to find one.

I have said that the author's expression is French in the sense in which he intends it, but not English.

A Frenchman, for instance, would say *Peut on à peine trouver un tel homme?* (literally, *can one scarcely, or hardly, find such a man?*) to signify that he really believed it almost impossible to find such a man. But, if he meant to signify that he should not have thought it so very difficult, he would say *Ne peut on donc qu'à peine trouver un tel homme?* literally, *cannot one then otherwise than hardly find such a man?* And it is perhaps from an intended imitation of the French that Mr. Harris, and some other writers, employ the word *scarcely* in an interrogatory

tory in such a manner as *with us* gives a sense contrary to what they purpose should be conveyed.

CXXII.

"I HAVE set down the names of several gentlemen, who have been robbed in Dublin-streets for these three years past." *Swift.*

Who have been robbed in Dublin-streets within these three years past is the proper expression. *Who have been robbed for these three years past* seems to imply that each of those gentlemen had been robbed during the whole three years.

CXXIII.

"It is a long time since I have been entirely your votary." *Devil upon Crutches.*

This is bad English. *Since* is properly used in reckoning from a point of time; but not to express a duration of time.

The translator might have said *It is a long time that I have been entirely your votary*, or *it is a long time since I became entirely your votary*.

CXXIV.

"LET him know I shall be over in the spring, and that by all means he sells the horses." *Swift's Letters.*

This being a direction how to act, and not an account of what is done or doing, the word *sells* is here improper. This verb should have been in the subjunctive mood.—*Let him know I shall be over in the spring, and that by all means he sell the horses.*

CXXV.

"MY brother Ormond sent me some chocolate to-day. I wish you had share of it." *Ibid.*

"I hope all will be ended by then." *Ibid.*
To have share of a thing, to signify *to have part of it*; and *by then*, to signify *by that time*; if they are not false English, are, at least, terribly low expressions.

CXXVI.

THE translator of Cicero's Letters says in one of his notes, speaking of two certain letters, "This proves that the date of each must have been nearly, if not exactly, coincident."

These words have no meaning: for they only imply, that the date of one of these letters was nearly coincident, and that the date of the other was nearly coincident likewise; without saying coincident with what.

The proper expression would have been, *This proves that the dates of the two letters must have been nearly, if not exactly coincident.*

CXXVII.

WE frequently hear people say, in talking of an actor, *That is the best part he plays*, where they mean that he performs no other part so well.

They should say *That is the part he plays best*.

That is the best part he plays signifies that that character is preferable to all the other characters in which he appears; and is an encomium upon the author, without at all regarding the performance of the player.

CXXVIII.

"I WAS soon relieved by one of the servants, who wrung off the bird's neck." *Gulliver's Travels.*

This is a common, but a wrong, way of speaking. We ought to say either *to wring the neck*, or *to wring off the head*.

To wring off the neck is not proper; inasmuch as, when the head is wrung off, it brings but a part (and commonly a small part) of the neck along with it.

CXXIX.

"THE bishop of Clogher intends to call on you this morning; as will your humble servant in my return from Chapel-Izzard." *Addison to Swift.*

Your and *my* employed so near together, in speaking of the same person, make an unnatural expression. He might have said, *as will your humble servant in returning from Chapel-Izzard.*

CXXX.

CXXX.

"AN attempt of this nature would be utterly impracticable." *Preface to Baker's Reflections on Learning.*

In the expression of *the design is impracticable*, there is no impropriety; whether the word *design* signify only *intention*, or *purpose*, or whether it signify *thing intended*, or *purposed*; for of either of them we may say, that it cannot be *reduced to*, or *put into*, *practice*.

But in the words, *an attempt of this nature would be impracticable*, there seems to be an impropriety: for, how impracticable soever a thing, which we have thoughts of attempting, may be, the attempting it will be always possible.

And yet the expression, considered as a figurative, is perhaps allowable. It is, however, such an one as I should scruple to use.

CXXXI.

"IF any one, who thinks thus of me, will only suspend his censure so long till I draw my conclusion, &c." *Hid.*

Suspend your censure so long that I may draw my conclusion.—Suspend your censure so long as to give me time to draw my conclusion. These are English, though something languid; and it might be better to say, *suspend your censure till I draw (or till I have drawn) my conclusion.*

So long that, and *so long as*, are English.—*So long till* is not English.

CXXXII.

"THE author being some distance from the press, &c."

Prefixed to the errata of the same book.

This is not English. The word *distance*, where we intend to give an idea of station, requires an *at*,—where of motion a *to*—before it.

Their house stands at some distance from that town.—They live at present in that town, but are going to remove to some distance from it.

CXXXIII. WHENEVER. ALWAYS.

THESE two words are not to be used together.

Whenever I call upon him, he always enquires after your health. The sense of the word *always* being included in the word *whenever* (for *whenever* signifies *always when*) this is as much as to say, *always when I call upon him, he always enquires after your health*: which is not sense.

The proper way of speaking is, *whenever I call upon him, he enquires after your health*; or, *he always enquires after your health, when I call upon him*.

CXXXIV. SORT OF A. KIND OF A.

HE is a strange sort of a man.—This is an odd kind of an affair.

Would not the *a* or *an* be better omitted? and is not a *strange sort of man, an odd kind of affair*, a more correct, as well as a more elegant, way of speaking?

CXXXV. INDEPENDENT OF. INDEPENDENT ON.

WE all say *dependent on*, or *upon*; and no one says *dependent of*; which expression would be absurd. Yet many say *independent of*.

Independent on, or *upon*, is certainly much better. This is quite *independent upon that*.

CXXXVI. NOTWITHSTANDING OF.

THIS is a very uncouth phrase; which frequently occurs in the Scotch, and sometimes in English, writers.

The proper way of speaking is, *notwithstanding this—notwithstanding that*.

Notwithstanding of this has no meaning: for *notwithstanding* is a preposition; and the linking another preposition with it certainly destroys all sense.

When I say it is a preposition, I mean that it is so where it precedes the substantive: for, where it follows the substantive, it may be considered as a participle; as in these words, so often to be met with in law-writings and acts of parliament, *any thing herein contained notwithstanding*;

ing; where the word *notwithstanding* seems to be a participle in the ablative case absolute, agreeing with the substantive *thing*.

Notwithstanding is likewise an adverb.

CXXXVII.

MANY of our writers say *by a parity of reason*.

By parity of reason, without the *a*, is certainly a more elegant expression.

CXXXVIII. HENCE. THENCE. WHENCE.

THOUGH the sense of the preposition *from* be included in each of these words, and they signify *from this place*, *from that place*, *from which* (or *what*) *place*, yet custom allows the prefixing this preposition to either of them, and saying *from hence*, *from thence*, *from whence*; which seems to be saying *from from this place*, &c.

Even our best writers in prose do not scruple to take this liberty; it seeming, in many places, to add strength to the expression. In poetry, where it has rather a contrary effect, it is seldom taken: for it is to be observed that the very same circumstance, which strengthens an expression in prose, often makes it flat in poetry.

CXXXIX.

“THE empire of Blefuscu is an island situated to the north-east side of Lilliput.” *Gulliver’s Travels*.

Situated to the north-east side I apprehend not to be English; and I think the writer should either have said *on the north-east side*, or have omitted the word *side*.

For instance, *The empire of Blefuscu is an island situated on the north-east side of Lilliput.*—*The empire of Blefuscu is an island situated to the north-east of Lilliput.* The preposition may likewise be omitted; *the empire of Blefuscu is an island situated north-east of Lilliput.*

CXL. SCARCE. HARDLY.

THESE words are incorrectly used with negatives.

EXAMPLE.

There is nothing scarce (or hardly) that pleases me better.
The

The correct way of speaking is, *There is scarce (or scarcely, or hardly) any thing that pleases me better.*

CXXI.

THE lower people in general, as well as many of their betters, and even many of our authors, use the word *beholding*, to signify *under an obligation*.

The proper word is *beholden*. *We are beholden to you for this favour.*

CXXII.

NEVER so much,—never so many—to signify *how much soever, how many soever*, is another impropriety, of which our careless writers are often guilty; and which, in all probability, took its rise among the lower people.

Ever so much, ever so many, is the proper way of speaking. *He will give her what she asks, though she ask ever so much.—They will be all entertained at his house, be they ever so many.—That army will not fear to engage the enemy, be they ever so numerous.*

CXXIII. WAS. WERE.

A VERY common fault is the using the former of these words in the subjunctive mood.

That man is of a very benevolent disposition; and, if he was rich, would probably shew himself charitable.

The correct way of speaking is, *if he were rich*; the verb being in the subjunctive mood.

Was may indeed be used with an *if*; but there only, where it is intended in the indicative mood.

That man died rich, says one. Another replies, *if he was rich, he lived in a manner by no means answerable to his fortune: for he always made a scurvy figure.*

This is very proper; because *if he was rich* signifies here *if the truth be that he actually was a rich man*; and speaks of what is supposed to have been, and to be now past; whereas, if I say, *that man would shew himself charitable, if he was rich*, I speak of nothing past, or supposed to be past; but of what the man's behaviour would now be, were his situation different from what it is. Consequently,

sequently, the verb (as I have said above) is in the subjunctive mood; on which account *were* (and not *was*) is the proper word.

CXLIV.

NEITHER has he, nor any others, done any thing in that affair.

Expressions of this sort are not uncommon: but they make false grammar: for *neither has he, nor any others*, signifies *neither has he, nor has any others*.

The proper way of speaking is, *neither has he, nor have any others, done any thing in that affair*.

CXLV. EITHER THAT. THAT EITHER.

THE former of these is often used, where the latter only would be proper: for they make very different senses.

An acquaintance promised yesterday to call on me this afternoon, but did not call; whence I conclude him to be a man regardless of his appointments, or to have been prevented by something unforeseen; without determining in my mind which of the two is the reason of his not calling.

Here it would be wrong for me to say, *I conclude either that he is regardless of his appointments, or that he has been prevented*. The proper way of speaking is, *I conclude that either he is regardless of his appointments, or he has been prevented*.

But, if a third person, who were to speak of this matter, supposed that I *had* determined in my mind which of the two above-mentioned causes was the occasion that this acquaintance did not call; but were himself ignorant which of the two I had fixed on; he ought to put the word *either* before the *that*, and to say *He concludes either that his acquaintance is regardless of his appointments, or that he has been prevented*.

CXLVI. PROPORTIONABLE. PROPORTIONAL. PROPORTIONATE.

MANY of our writers confound the word *proportionable* with *proportional*: but their senses are different.

Proportionable signifies *having its several parts of a just relative proportion, each to the others; and each particular*
part

part of a bigness suitable to its length. A horse is proportionable, when no part of him is too massy, or too slender; and each part, at the same time, corresponds, as to its general size, with every other.

Proportionable is also used, to signify of a good size upon the whole; without regard to the correspondency of the several parts.

Proportional signifies of a just proportion relatively to another object.—His new house is very large; and the offices, which are now building, will be proportional.

Proportionate has the sense of *proportional*.—That man has studied hard; and he has made an improvement proportionate to the pains he has taken.

CXLVII.

WE want in our language a word, to answer to the French verb *ménager*, where it signifies to treat with tenderness or caution, from the fear of giving offence by a rougher behaviour. We have, indeed, several authors, who employ the word *manage* (which they have taken from the above French verb) in this sense. But it seldom neatly conveys the intended idea; the senses, in which this word is more commonly understood, almost ever obtruding themselves in some degree.

Is there no word, in Greek or Latin, which bears the sense of this French verb, and no other sense, and which word might be Anglicised?

CXLVIII.

THE New Biographical Dictionary has the following words, under the article Julian.

“ This, joined to a severe temperance, an affected love of justice, and a courage superior to all trials, first gained him the affections, and afterwards the possession, of the whole empire.”

This seems to me not strictly to make sense; the word *empire* being here, at one and the same time, both figurative, and almost, if not entirely, literal. *The affections of the empire* is a figurative expression, since it means the affections of its inhabitants. *The possession of the empire* is more literal.

The

The same objection may be made to the word *in*, in the following passage from Moyle.

“ I will venture to prophecy that, if a man walks naked in rain, hail, or the depth of winter, he will be seized with the cold fit of an ague.”

He ought to have repeated the word *in* before the words *the depth of winter*: for the leaving it to be supplied by the reader’s imagination supposes it to have the same signification here as it has where he says *in rain, hail*; which it has not.

CXLIX.

“ WE are unacquainted,” says the same Moyle, “ with his country, descent, and age he lived in.”

For want of the word *the* before *age*, this seems to be saying, *We are unacquainted with his country, his descent, and his age he lived in*; which is not sense.

This affectation of concise expression, so common in our English writers, defeats, in numberless instances, the very end proposed by it; for it frequently occasions an obscurity that stops the reader; and it costs him, beyond comparison, more time, to discover the author’s meaning, than an additional word or two, which would have prevented such obscurity, would have taken him to read: and, even when he has found the meaning, there still remains in his mind a dissatisfaction at the unnaturalness of the expression.

CL.

His style is simple; but often low and incorrect.

This way of speaking, though it does not make nonsense, as the sentence quoted in the last remark seems to do, would be, nevertheless, in some degree reprehensible, as being liable to be misunderstood.

If the meaning be that the style is in many places low, and in many others incorrect, the word *often* ought to be repeated. *His style is simple; but often low, and often incorrect.*

But, if the meaning be that the lowness and incorrectness are to be found together (which is the most natural interpretation of the words) it were better, in order to avoid a possibility of being misunderstood, to insert either the word

word both, or the words at the same time.—His style is simple; but, in many places, both low and incorrect.—His style is simple; but, in many places, low, and, at the same time, incorrect.

CLI. BE IT AS IT WILL. BE THAT AS IT WILL.

THIS was formerly the way of speaking: but many of our modern writers have exchanged the word *will* for *may*.—*Be it as it may.*—*Be that as it may.*

This is more elegant, and seems to be more proper.

CLII.

“IT is pity he should make use of any arms against his opponents, but the weapon of truth; which he is always able to manage with dexterity, and seldom without success.”

A Reviewer.

The Reviewer should have said *and seldom manages without success*. The fear of a repetition of sound has made him say what he did not intend: for his expression signifies that his writer is *seldom able* to manage that weapon without success.

CLIII.

DE Witt is made to say to King William, in the Dialogues of the Dead, “Thebes did not owe its liberty more to Epaminondas than Holland to you.”

He should have said *than Holland hers to you*.

As the expression stands, it signifies that *Holland* was as much indebted to King William for the liberty of *Thebes* as *Thebes* was indebted for it to *Epaminondas*.

CLIV.

“THERE was indeed in our destinies,” says the Countess of Clanrickard to the Princess of Orange in the same Dialogues, “such a conformity as seldom is found between that of two persons in the same age.”

Between those of two persons in the same age would have been the proper expression: and especially after having used the plural (*destinies*), in speaking of the different fortunes of the prince and herself.

CLV.

CLV.

IN these dialogues Octavia says to Arria, "I was not become indifferent to my husband. His idea was dear, too dear, to me still."

Her meaning, when she says *I was not become indifferent to my husband*, is that she, at the time she speaks of, still retained an affection for her husband. But her words do not convey this meaning: they signify that *he* still retained an affection for *her*.

She might have said *I was not become indifferent in regard to my husband*, or, *as to my husband*.

If I am indifferent *in regard to* any particular person, I care little for that person: but, if I am indifferent *to* that person, that person cares little for *me*.

CLVI.

I HAVE met with the following sentence in some author; but cannot recollect the name: "He has not only misunderstood, but applied, a text of St. Paul;" to signify *he has not only misunderstood, but misapplied*.

This is an execrable way of writing; though I make no doubt the above author valued himself for his ingenious conciseness.

CLVII.

"IT must be owned that, in most-cases, even a guinea is a small enough fee for the trouble and attendance upon such occasions." *Parliamentary Debates*.

Had the speaker delivered himself in the common style, he had said *a guinea is a small fee enough*: but his expression is much better than this. The word *enough* ought immediately to follow the word *small*, whether *small* be placed before or after *fee*.—*A small enough fee—a fee small enough*.

"Whenever any design was set on foot against the government, the first scene has been always laid in that country." *Ibid*.

The *was* and the *has been* in this period do not correspond. The speaker should have said either, *Whenever any design was set on foot, the first scene was laid*; or, *whenever*

any design has been set on foot, the first scene has been laid, &c.

I observe in another remark the impropriety of using the word *whenever* with the word *always*.

CLVIII. VERSE. STANZA.

Not only almost all the common people, but even great numbers of persons of good education, call by the name of *verse* each of those divisions, in which many poems are written; consisting, for the most part, of the same number of lines, one as another; each of which divisions in a common song takes in the whole of the tune.

The proper word is *stanza*. A *verse* in poetry is only one line.

CLIX. TIME OUT OF MIND. FROM TIME IMMORTAL.

WE commonly say *time out of mind*, without a preposition; and *from time immemorial*: but *time immemorial*, without the preposition, is hitherto used by no correct writers or speakers; though not infrequently by newswriters, (great corrupters of the language) and by other bad penmen.

CLX. BECAUSE. AS.

MANY of our writers follow the words *the more*, or *so much the more*, with a *because*, instead of an *as*.

EXAMPLE.

His contemptuous treatment of his wife was so much the more inexcusable, because the fortune she brought had been the making of him.

This hardly makes sense. The proper word is *as*; not *because*.

His contemptuous treatment of his wife was so much the more inexcusable as the fortune she brought had been the making of him.

CLXI.

THE word *ill* is often omitted, where it is absolutely necessary.

“ This

“ This humour held no longer than Averröes came to be understood.” *Baker's Reflections on Learning.*

This does not make sense. The author should have said *This humour held no longer than till Averröes came to be understood.*

CLXII.

“ AVERRÖES is now as much out of fashion for his philosophy as Avicen is for his physic; though they were once the wonder of their age and nation.” *Ibid.*

They were once the wonder of their nation is sense.—They were once the wonder of their age is not so; the word once indicating an uncertain, and their age a certain, time. Here is therefore the same impropriety as there would be in saying some time this morning, a friend called upon me at eleven o'clock.

I am ignorant whether these two men (Averröes and Avicen) were contemporaries. If they were so, and if their works continued in reputation much longer among their countrymen than elsewhere, (which, the temper of mankind considered, appears probable) the author might have said, *though they were the wonder of their age, and, even for a considerable time after, of their own nation.*—If they were not contemporaries, he might have said *though each of them was the wonder of his age, and, even for a considerable time after, of his own nation.*

CLXIII.

A CERTAIN impropriety, though a very gross one, is almost universal among us.

After an event, which we imagine will never happen again, we say *This is the last time it will ever happen.* A man, who lives in the country, being just returned from London, whither he supposes he shall never go again, would say, *this is the last time I shall ever go to London.* But this *shall go*, which is a future, is utterly improper in speaking of an action already performed. A Frenchman would say, *voilà la dernière fois que je vais à Londres;* which is equivalent to *this is the last time of my going to London:* and this is certainly the proper way of speaking.

CLXIV.

WE have some writers, who, where a substantive plural follows, say *what are* (instead of *what is*) *become of*?—For instance, *What are become of those men?* A little reflection will shew this to be wrong.

The French, indeed, say very grammatically *que sont devenus ces*—? But *become of* and *devenus* (or *devenu*) are not similar phrases: for *become of* is not to be considered as one word, as a verb (or participle) and a preposition (or adverb) may sometimes be; where they ought, in strict propriety, to be joined by a hyphen. For example, *the guns are let-off—a strong northerly wind is set-in*. But, were any one to say, *What are those men become-of?* every hearer would feel this not to be English. Yet I conceive this would be proper, if *what are become of those men?* were so. In short, the palpable impropriety of *what are those men become-of?* shews plainly that the word *what* is the nominative that governs the verb; which nominative, being singular, requires *is*, and not *are*: and, as to *those men*, these words must be supposed to be in one of the oblique cases, and to be governed by the preposition *of*.

CLXV.

LET US suppose twenty pillars placed in a row, with a statue between the first pillar and the second, another between the second and the third, a third between the third and the fourth, and so on throughout. How will this be best expressed? Some very incorrect speakers would say *There is a statue between every pillar*: others, less incorrect, would say *there is a statue between every two pillars*. This is much less bad; but it does not convey neatly the idea intended, which is that there is one statue, and no more, between every two pillars that are next to each other; whereas the first pillar and the last, or the third and the fifteenth, or the fifth and the nineteenth, are *two pillars*, and between each of these *two* there are *several* statues.

I do not remember to have seen or heard the word *proximate* employed in any similar case: yet it would perhaps not be an improper one.

There is a statue between every two proximate pillars.

CLXVI.

CLXVI.

“HIS opinion was nearer to the truth than of his successors.” *Wotton on ancient and modern Learning.*

Another instance of injudicious conciseness.

For want of the pronoun *that*, this sentence does not make sense. The words *of his successors* stand opposed to the words *his opinion*. It is therefore as though the author had said *Of his successors was not so near to the truth as his opinion was*.

He ought undoubtedly to have said *His opinion was nearer to the truth than that of his successors*.

CLXVII.

“THIS part of knowledge has been always growing, and will still do so till the subject is exhausted.” *Ibid.*

Will do what? The words *to do so* cannot properly refer to the verb *to be*: for the *being* in this or that state does not imply the *doing* any thing.

The author might have said *This part of knowledge has been always growing; and will still be so* (or, *will be still growing*) *till the subject is exhausted*.

CLXVIII.

“AFTER the peace of *Ryfwick*, procured by the first grand alliance, did not a new and greater danger require another such league to be formed?”

Dialogues of the Dead.

Most people, instead of *another such league*, would have said *such another league*: but *another such league* is the proper expression.

The word *such* may plead prescription for the wrong place it commonly occupies: but, to prove that it is a wrong one, we have here only to exchange this word for *similar*.—*Did not a new and greater danger require similar another league to be formed?* How bad an expression is this! Whereas, if we say *another, similar league*, the ear feels the word *similar* to be in its right place.

The expression, *a new and greater danger*, in the period just now quoted, is better than *a new and a greater danger*,

which last many writers would have made use of; because a reader might possibly, at first sight, and before he gave himself time to reflect, be misled by the words *a new and a greater danger*, and imagine *two* dangers to be here spoken of, one new, the other greater than that which subsisted before the peace of Ryfwick. But the words *a new and greater danger* are not liable to be so misunderstood.

CLXIX.

“THE crown had it in their power to give such rewards as they thought proper.” *Parliamentary Debates.*

Were two sovereigns seated on a throne at the same time, this way of speaking would be justifiable, because the *crown*, which is a figurative term, might then be considered as a noun of number. But, that not being the case, the expression is wrong; and the proper way of speaking is, *The crown had it in its power to give such rewards as it thought proper.*

CLXX.

IN these Parliamentary Debates there frequently occurs the expression of *upon the contrary*, instead of *on the contrary*.

Though *on* and *upon* have the same signification, *upon the contrary* is certainly not English, it not being an expression used.

CLXXI.

IN the same Debates (and likewise in many of our authors) we sometimes find *of purpose* instead of *on purpose*, to signify *purposely, designedly*.

On purpose is the proper expression.

The preposition *of* is in numberless instances made use of by the lower people instead of *on*; and in not a few even by learned men. I am apt to suspect that sometimes, where it is thus improperly used by these last, their acquaintance with the French tongue may be the cause, and that they consider it as having the sense of the preposition *de*. But this preposition, having several other significations, is in many places proper, where *of* would be absurd.

CLXXII.

CLXXII.

“THE ends of a divine and human lawgiver, both using the common means of a separation, are vastly different; the latter only aiming to keep the people unmixed, the former pure from idolatry.”

Divine Legation.

One would imagine, upon hearing the words of a divine and human lawgiver, that one person only was spoken of. How improper would it be, in speaking of two men, one very tall, the other very corpulent, to say *a very tall and corpulent man!* The hearers would suppose that one man only was meant, who was both tall and corpulent.

The author of the Legation should have said *The ends of a divine, and those of a human lawgiver, are vastly different.*

CLXXIII.

“THE history of Florence is little else, for several ages, than a history of conspiracies and civil wars.”

Cosmo to Pericles, in the Dialogues of the Dead.

Little else than is the proper way of speaking; though many writers (perhaps the greater part) would have said *little else excepting*, or *little else but*, or *little else besides*; either of which would be wrong, because in each of these three words (*excepting*, *but*, *besides*), the sense of *else* is included: for *excepting*, or *but*, or *besides*, would be here equivalent to *else than*.

Yet either of these three expressions (*little else excepting*, *little else but*, *little else besides*) would be very proper where some circumstances were antecedently mentioned, to which the word *else* should refer. If I should say *that house has a good prospect; but has little else to recommend it, except its nearness to a market-town*, this makes sense; because the *else* has something to which it refers, viz. *good prospect*.

CLXXIV.

“HERE the speaker must take care to be much slower and distinct in his utterance than usual.”

Sheridan's Lectures.

The author should, at all events, have inserted the word *more* immediately before the word *distinct*:—*much slower and*

and more distinct in his utterance than usual: for, though the word *slower* signify *more slow*, the word *more* does not, as he has penned the sentence, present itself to the reader's mind immediately before the word *distinct*. Consequently, his expression does not make sense.

But, if his meaning be (as most probably it is) that the speaker should be *much slower*, and likewise *much more distinct*, the word *much*, in order to make it clear that that was his meaning, ought to have been repeated; and he should have said *Here the speaker must take care to be much slower, and much more distinct, in his utterance than usual*.

CLXXV.

"SCARCE had The Spirit of Laws appeared than it was attacked." *A Reviewer.*

This is not good English. *No sooner* would have required a *than*: but the word *scarce* required a *when* to follow it.

No sooner had The Spirit of Laws appeared than it was attacked.—Scarce had the Spirit of Laws appeared, when it was attacked.

CLXXVI.

"IT is not many years since I remember a person, who, &c." *Swift.*

This does not appear to me to make sense. I think the writer should have said, *I remember a person, who, not many years since, &c.*

CLXXVII.

"RICHARD, therefore, appears," says a modern writer, "not to have been abhorred by either the courts of Spain or Scotland."

This is certainly very confused expression. The proper way of speaking would have been, *Richard, therefore, appears not to have been abhorred by either the court of Spain, or that of Scotland; or, Richard, therefore, appears not to have been abhorred either by the court of Spain, or by that of Scotland.*

CLXXVIII.

CLXXVIII.

“POLYDORE VIRGIL,” says the same writer, “a foreigner, and author of a light Latin history, was here during the reigns of Henry VII. and VIII.”

This is likewise, in some measure, confused. Were it not for the plural *reigns*, Henry VII. and VIII. would seem to be but one man, as our first James was James the first and sixth; as being the first James of England, and the sixth of Scotland.

It would have been much better to say *During the two reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII. or during the reigns of the two Henrys, the seventh and the eighth.*

CLXXIX.

“SHE lived no farther than the Hague.” *The same Writer.*

This appears to me not to be strictly good English. I think the writer should have said *no farther off*. We say, indeed, *to go far*, without using the *off*. But *to be far*, where no other word is used or supposed, I apprehend to be improper. For instance, *York is far from London*.—It is *far from* London to York.—It is *far to* York.—These are proper expressions. But this expression—*York is far*, I conceive not to be so. The proper expression is *York is far off*.

CLXXX.

“THIS jealousy accounts for Hall charging the Duke of Clarence, as well as the Duke of Gloucester, with the murder of Prince Edward.”

“This very circumstance takes off from the probability of Richard having as yet laid any plan for dispossessing his nephew.”

The same Writer.

This is in my opinion a very uncouth way of speaking, though much used by ignorant people, and often affected by those who are not ignorant. The writer should certainly have said *Hall's charging the duke*, and *Richard's having as yet laid any plan*. By the omission of the *s*, the words *charging* and *having*, from substantives that they were, become participles, and make no sense.

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The *s* should never be omitted, but where it makes a disagreeable sound, or causes a difficulty of pronunciation: for the omission never fails of either making the passage unmeaning, or giving it a sense different from the intended one.

CLXXXI. ABIDE. ABIDE BY.

WE have writers, who seem not to distinguish between these two: the first of which signifies *to suffer, to endure*; the other, *to continue steadfast to, not to forsake*.

CLXXXII.

“IN nothing do men approach nearer to the gods than by preserving their fellow-creatures.”

Duncan's Translation of Cicero's Oration for Ligarius.

Though there be here no absolute impropriety, I should think the same preposition to the *nothing* and to the *preserving* would be more easy and more elegant than two different prepositions.

By nothing do men approach nearer to the gods than by preserving their fellow-creatures. In nothing do men approach nearer to the gods than in preserving their fellow-creatures. Of these two I should prefer the latter.

CLXXXIII.

“MEN ignorant of the nature and end of this institution have adjudged it altogether unworthy the concern of God.”

Divine Legation.

We say *to adjudge to*:—the court has *adjudged the estate to the plaintiff*—the house has been *adjudged to her*. But *adjudge it unworthy* is, surely, not English: for *adjudge* has not the sense of *judge*. The proper expression would have been *have judged it altogether unworthy, &c.*

CLXXXIV.

“MOST an end.”

Ibid.

This writer, who has treated so many other writers *de haut en bas*, abounds in such low expressions as *even*, though his productions were unexceptionable in every other

other respect, would afford no little room for recrimination. *Most an end*, by which is meant *most commonly—for the most part*, is an expression that would almost disgrace the mouth of a hackney-coachman.

CLXXXV.

“THE same historian tells us, when Egypt was become
“a province to Persia, the Egyptians deified Darius: which
“they had never done to any other king.”

Ibid.

The *done to*, as referring to the word *deified*, is improper, since we do not say *deify to a man*, but *deify a man*.

By using only the *done*, the impropriety had been avoided: and yet, *which they had never done any other king*, though not ungrammatical, would have sounded but uncouthly.

The author might have repeated the word *deified*, and have said *The Egyptians deified Darius, though they had never deified any other king*;—or (putting a full stop, or at least a colon, after *deified Darius*) *the Egyptians deified Darius: yet they had never deified any other king*.

CLXXXVI.

“ALL I desire is that, if the contracting of debts, if arrogance, if youthful debaucheries lie at present under a general odium, as I see they do, the vices of others, nor the depravity of the times may be of no prejudice to Cælius.”

Duncan's Translation of Cicero's Oration for Cælius.

The word *neither* is here to be supposed immediately before the words *the vices*: for the meaning is *I desire that neither the vices of others, nor the depravity of the times may be of prejudice to him*.

The thus leaving the word *neither* to be supplied by the reader's or auditor's imagination, where there follows a *nor*, has often something in it peculiarly elegant.

But the translator has been guilty of an oversight in the words *nor the depravity of the times may be of no prejudice*; for *nor no* signifies *and some*: so that, in this translation, Cicero, instead of wishing that the circumstances he mentions

tions may be of no prejudice to his client, is made to wish that they *may be* of prejudice to him.

The translator should have written *All I desire is that the vice of others nor the depravity of the times may be of any prejudice to Cælius.*

CLXXXVII.

“REGARD is to be had to every one’s circumstances, healths and abilities.”

His Translation of the Oration against Cælius.

Every one is singular; the words implying *each*, considered singly.—*Every one’s healths* is therefore a grossly improper way of speaking; this plural being never used in speaking of an individual; as are the plurals *circumstances* and *abilities*.

It is sometimes difficult not to conceive an unreasonable disregard for the knowledge of the Latin and Greek, when one considers how poorly those, who are supposed to have been thorough masters of them, have written the language of their own country. This translator, who is perhaps as good a Latinist as any man in Europe, is far from writing English well. But is it not amazing that some, who have been beyond a doubt very excellent Grecians and Latinists, have written their mother-tongues not only inelegantly, but even very incorrectly and ungrammatically?

CLXXXVIII.

“THESE words have the same sense of those others.”

This is a way in which many (perhaps the greater part) would speak or write. But the expression appears to me a bad one; and I think we ought to say either *these words have the sense of those others*, without the word *same*, or if this word be used, *these words have the same sense with those others*, or *as those others*.

In *these words have the same sense of those others*, I cannot perceive that the word *same* has any meaning.

CLXXXIX.

THOMAS, son of William Arnold, Mayor of York.

This is the style of many a careless writer. It does not here appear which of the two, the father, or the son, is (or was) mayor of York. Most readers would, in all probability, suppose the father to be the man. But the words do not absolutely determine that it is he.

Writers should express themselves in such a manner as to leave no doubt.

CXC. SOME TIME. SOMETIME. SOME TIMES. SOMETIMES.

WRITERS do not always properly distinguish these words.

Some time signifies a certain space of time, or during a certain space of time.—*Some time* will be required for the completing that business.—*He has been down to his country-house, and stayed there some time.*

Sometime is to be used only in speaking of what is past, and has one of the senses of the word *once*. Lord Bacon, *sometime* chancellor of England; that is, who was once chancellor of England.

In the words *sometimes*, certain times are distinguished from other times.—*Some times* are prosperous, and *some quite the contrary*.—*Sometimes* is a distinction from *always*.—*I sometimes rise early: but not always; nor, indeed, often.*

CXCI.

WHEN followed by a *then* in the same sentence.

She is supposed to be in love with him; for, when she sees him, then she is like to faint.

When signifies at the time, at which: *then* signifies at that time.—*When she sees him, she is like to faint* signifies, therefore, at the time, at which she sees him, at that time she is like to faint.

Is it not visible that the word *then* not only is superfluous, but even makes a confusion that seems to banish sense?

Yet I do not condemn this way of speaking upon all occasions, though it be irregular and ungrammatical. It

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gives

gives a strength, and an appearance of earnestness; and is therefore, in many cases, where the speaker would inculcate strongly the observation he is making, not only allowable, but even preferable to the regular and grammatical way of speaking.

CXCII. HEART-FELT.

OUR modern poetasters are so enamoured of this word that they even surfeit us with their *heart-felt joys* and their *heart-felt sorrows*.

At the same time, I will not answer for it that they give us the word in its proper sense. They make it to signify *excessive—extreme*. I should rather suppose it to signify *real—unfeigned*. But whether *they* are right, or whether *I* am right, as to the sense of the word, the truth is, that their everlasting and affected use of it gives us a *heart-felt* nausea.

CXCIII. PREFERENCE OF.

HE gives his second son the preference of the eldest.—She gives London the preference of the country.

This is a common way of speaking, but what I can by no means approve. I cannot perceive that *preference of* in these places even makes sense; and we certainly ought to say *preference to*, or *preference before*.—*He gives his second son the preference to (or before) his eldest.*—*She gives London the preference to (or before) the country.*

Preference of is to be used (as I should imagine) only where *preference* has the sense of the substantive *preferring*. *The preference of this man to that other man: that is, the preferring this man to that other man.*

CXCIV.

THE author of the Introduction to English Grammar seems to condemn the use of the word *either*, as made to signify *each*; and quotes the two following passages from scripture. *The king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, sat either of them on his throne.*—*Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censor.*

His Lordship gives, as a reason of his disapprobation, the word *either's* bearing another sense. This objection, with all deference to a venerable character, does not appear to me of any great weight.

Numberless words are used in different tenses without any inconvenience. Where the word *either*, signifying *each*, is liable to be misapprehended, it is, doubtless, to be condemned: but in the above citations, and in many other places where it occurs, it has, in my opinion, an elegance; and in some a very great one.

CXC.V. DESTITUTE OF. DEPRIVED OF.

MANY of our writers seem to consider these two phrases as synonymous. I apprehend there is a difference in their meanings. We are *destitute of* that, of which we are not now actually possessed, whether we have been formerly possessed of it, or not. But, to be now *deprived of* any thing, we must, as I conceive, taking the word in its strict sense, have been once possessed of it.

Yet, *deprived of* having, in many places, a much more easy sound than *destitute of*, the former is frequently used, where, if my above conjecture be right, it is not absolutely proper: and we have had, perhaps, few writers, who would have scrupled to say, of a man born blind, that he was deprived of sight; though sight was what he never enjoyed.

Neither should I blame a writer for saying of a vicious young prince, whom the subjects of his late father had set aside, that his vices had *deprived him of* a crown; as we should say of an unsuccessful candidate for a place, that he had *lost* that place; a thing he was never possessed of.

CXC.VI.

A CERTAIN mode of speaking is common among us, (and I do not always avoid it myself) which I fear does not make sense, viz. the following the words *possible* and *impossible* by an infinitive. For instance; *What you propose is impossible to do, or to be done.*

Possible—impossible signify *which may be—which cannot be*, and perhaps *which may be done—which cannot be done.*

Now, in whichever of these significations either of them is taken, the addition of *to do*, or *to be*, or *to be done*, makes, surely, a confusion that excludes sense. Yet, for want of a better expression readily presenting itself, I have used the following words in the 74th remark *This is the best way of speaking, because it is impossible to be misunderstood.*

I often wonder that we have not coined the words *facible*, *infacible*, or *faciable*, *infaciable*; which would be easy derivations from the Latin word *facere*, to signify *capable* and *incapable of being done*. We have, indeed, *feasible* (of which we do not make much use) which we have taken from the French. But *facible* and *infacible* have, I think, a better sound.

CXCVII. EACH OTHER. ONE ANOTHER.

THESE sound to the ear as though the two words were in each of them in the same case; whereas, in fact, they are not so.

That man and his son-in-law love one another.—That woman and her daughter-in-law hate each other. Here the words *one* and *each* are in the nominative case: *other* and *another* in the accusative: the meaning being, in speaking of the men, that *one* party loves the *other*; in speaking of the women, that *each* party hates the *other*.

But these phrases have a still worse effect where they follow a preposition. Yet it is where they are accompanied by a preposition, that the words are the most easily separated, by placing the preposition between them; which may frequently be done without any stiffness. If I say *Those two towns are at a great distance one from the other*, there is certainly no stiffness in the expression; and it is by far a less inelegant, as well as a much more proper and correct, way of speaking than *Those two towns are at a great distance from one another*.

The word *another*, where only two objects are mentioned, seems to be an impropriety. It is better to say *the other*.

CXCVIII.

A WORD is often employed as a nominative case, without governing any verb, or being in apposition with any other nominative.

“It is against the laws of the realm; which, as they are preserved and maintained by your majesty’s authority, so we assure ourselves you will not suffer them to be violated by your family.”

Address to the King, Parliamentary Debates.

The word *which* has here no verb; and the sentence is consequently ungrammatical. But this way of speaking, which is very convenient, is, at the same time, so universal (for we have perhaps no author who avoids it) that I dare not pronounce it to be bad English.

CXCIX.

A CERTAIN designer, now living, has frequently, in the printed catalogues of the pictures he has exposed to view, given us the names *Raffaële, Titiano, Annibale Carracci, &c.*

This savours greatly of affectation. As the names of the painters *Titiano* and *Annibale Carracci* have been long Anglicised, and as these painters are universally known among us by the names of *Titian* and *Hannibal Carrache*, it is preposterous for one Englishman to talk to another of *Titiano* and *Annibale Carracci*.

Foreign Christian names are still more pedantic than foreign surnames. We all know who *Raphael* is: but, pray, who is *Raffaële*? I presume that, if this designer had occasion to mention *Alexander the Great*, and *Philip*, his father, he would call them *Alexandros* and *Philippos*. Indeed, where a foreigner has been hitherto named among us by his foreign *Christian* name, and the *English* name, which answers to it, was never yet used in speaking of him, the foreign name is, for that reason, the most proper. It is therefore better and more natural for an *Englishman* to say *Julio Romano* than *Julius Romano*, the painter of that name having never yet been called *Julius* among us. But, had it been long customary to call him *Julius*, it would now be mere pedantry to speak of him by the

name of *Julio*. Our poets, it is true, are allowed greater liberties, and may deviate from the common way of speaking without the imputation of pedantry.

“Carracci’s strength, Corregio’s softer line,

“Paulo’s free stroke, and Titian’s warmth divine.” *Pope*.

I have often been much offended at *Quin* the player, who, in the part of *Othello*, whenever he spoke of *Cassio* by his *Christian* name, pronounced it *Meebil*, and not *Michael*. What reason could the man possibly assign for this? and in what light did he see this word? *Othello*, it is true, is speaking to *Italians*. But what then? The play being written in the *English* tongue, and for the entertainment of an *English* audience, every thing is to be pronounced as an *Englishman* pronounces, though this *English* audience is, at the same time, to suppose the dialogue to be in the *Italian* tongue: and there is no more reason for giving a foreign pronunciation to this name of *Michael* than for giving it to all the rest of the play, and, consequently, talking all the way unintelligibly.

CC.

“IF the charges, which that commission has already and
“will stand the public in, were to be deducted, there will
“be very little remaining, to be divided among the suf-
“ferers.” *Parliamentary Debates*.

If a man say *The money that my son does now, and will farther stand me in*, the expression has nothing exceptionable; because the word *stand*, which follows, is naturally supposed after the *does now*; and it is plain that the speaker means, *the money that my son now stands me in, and will farther stand me in*.

But the above-cited sentence, *the charges which that commission has already, and will stand the public in*, does not make sense; because it is not the word *stand*, but the word *stood*, which is to be supposed after the word *already*. But, there being no other *stood* in the sentence, the imagination of the reader or hearer does not supply it. It ought therefore to be expressed, *The charges which that commission has already stood, and will stand the public in*.

Nay, even the very same word, which precedes or follows, is not always easily supplied by the reader’s or hearer’s imagination;

imagination; and I much doubt whether it would be right to say, *the money, which my son has already, and will farther cost me.*—*Has already cost, and will farther cost me,* would, as I apprehend, be much better: for the word *cost*, when joined with the auxiliary *has*, seems to present itself in a different view from what it does when following the auxiliaries *do* and *will*: wherefore *has already, and will farther cost me* hurts the ear.

It would be still much worse to speak in the following manner; *When I related that piece of news to the two brothers, it pleased one of them extremely, and the other was so not a little*; to signify that the other was likewise not a little pleased; because these two *pleaseds*, one of which is a verb active, and the other, whether considered as a participle, or as part of a verb, is passive, are words of very widely different senses. Yet we have many authors who write in this negligent way.

CCI.

IN the words quoted from the *Parliamentary Debates* in the preceding remark, there is still another impropriety.

“If the charges were to be deducted, there will be very little remaining,” is ungrammatical, the *were to be deducted* being in the preter-imperfect tense, and the *will be* in the future.

We ought to say either, *if the charges were deducted, (or were to be deducted) there would be very little remaining*; or, *if the charges are deducted, (or be deducted, or shall be deducted) there will be very little remaining.*

CCII.

“THEY argue as if the number of forces were to be kept up against law; whereas the very design of the motion is in order to have a law for the keeping them up.” *Ibid.*

This is improperly expressed. *The very design* and *in order* are not both to be used: for they signify (allowing for the difference between a substantive and an adverbial phrase) the same thing. When, therefore, a man says *the very design is in order*, it is as though he said *the very design is with a design.*

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The speaker might have said, *The motion is made merely in order to have a law for the keeping them up*, or (which is a better expression) *the very design of the motion is the having a law for the keeping them up*.

CCIII.

BID and *forbid* are improperly used by the greatest part of our writers in the preter-imperfect and first preter-perfect tenses; likewise with the auxiliaries, and as participles passive.

The participles passive, and the proper words with the auxiliaries, are *bidden* and *forbidden*. *Bade* and *forbade* are the preter-imperfect and first preter-perfect tenses. *A high price bidden—an action forbidden—he has bidden a high price—he has forbidden the action—he bade his servant do it—he forbade him to do it*.

Writ and *wrote* are likewise improperly used with the auxiliaries, and as participles passive. *Written* is the proper word. *A copy fairly written—he has written the letter—the letter is written*.

Run is also improper in the preter-imperfect and preter-perfect. Yet Pope has used it in the latter of these tenses in his *Dunciad*. *He said, and run*. The proper word is *ran*.

There is little expectation that these faults, with many others of the same kind, will ever be universally amended: for it can scarcely be doubted but that our poets will continue to indulge themselves in them for the sake of rhyme or measure: and their authority will always give them a sanction.

CCIV.

OUR writers are often, through inattention, deceived by the *s* at the end of substantives in the genitive case; and, taking those substantives for nominatives, use a verb plural, where they ought to use a verb singular.

“His words being applicable to the common mistake
“of our age, induce me to transcribe them.”

Dr. Foster on Accent and Quantity.

Words is here in the genitive case, and ought to have an apostrophe at the end.

If I say, *these two men's working so hard yesterday has thrown them into a fever*:—*working* is here a substantive, not a participle, and is in the nominative case. The words *these two men's* are in the genitive; and, if any one word be the nominative to the verb *has thrown*, it is *working*. But, properly speaking, all these words, *these two men's working so hard yesterday*, are the nominative to the verb; and these words, considered as a nominative, are not a plural, but a singular. Consequently, *have thrown* (instead of *has thrown*) would make false grammar.

It is the same with the sentence quoted above. The word *being* is there not a participle, but a substantive. Or, perhaps, it might not be improper to join the two words *being* and *applicable* together by a hyphen, and to consider them as one; which word would be equivalent to *applicableness*: for *his words' being applicable* signifies *the applicableness of his words*; and all these words, *his words' being applicable to the common mistake of our age*, are the nominative to the verb, and are a nominative singular, not plural. The author should therefore have written *induces*, not *induce*. *His words' being applicable to the common mistake of our age induces me to transcribe them*.

That this is the right way of understanding this sentence cannot reasonably be doubted; for, if we consider *words* as a nominative, and *being* as a participle agreeing therewith, *his words induce me to transcribe them* will signify *his words induce me to transcribe his words*: a strange way of talking!

CCV.

THE pronouns *his*, *her*, and *their*, are improper, when serving as adjectives to substantives conjoined with the pronoun *who*.

“It is hard to be conceived that a set of men could ever be chosen by their cotemporaries, to have divine honours paid them, whilst numerous persons were alive, who knew their imperfections, and who themselves, or their immediate ancestors, might have as fair a pretence, and come in competition with them.”

Pridcaux, as quoted in the Divine Legation.

The writer should have said, *and who themselves, or whose immediate ancestors, might have as fair a pretence, &c.*

CCVI.

CCVI. COTEMPORARY.

THOUGH the word *cotemporary*, which occurs in the last quotation, be used by many esteemed writers, (among others, by Lord Bolingbroke, perhaps one of our best penmen) there are critics, who insist that it is improper, and that we ought always to say *contemporary*.

They lay it down as a rule that *co* is to be used only where the word, with which it is joined, begins with a vowel, as in *co-eval*, *co-existent*, *co-incident*, *co-operate*, &c.

CCVII. PREVIOUSLY.

I HAVE already taken notice of the word *previous*, as being improperly used as an adverb, instead of *previously*. But *previously* likewise appears to me not to be always the right word, where we find it. I apprehend that, in strict propriety, it ought to be employed only where the circumstance mentioned immediately with it has some relation to another that follows, or to something that has been mentioned already.

A man equips himself in a riding-dress *previously* to his getting on horseback.—He solicits for a post, for which he has *previously* proved himself to be well qualified.

But, where there is no such relation, a mere priority in time does not, in my opinion, justify the use of this word. For instance; *I practised an hour upon the harpsichord this morning previously to my dressing myself.*

There being no relation between a man's dressing himself, and his playing on the harpsichord, I should imagine the word *previously* to be here wrong.

It seems a wonder that we have no such word as *priorly*. It would be naturally formed from *prior*, and would be very useful.

CCVIII.

“EVEN after science had once dawned upon them, the
 “Scots seemed to be sinking back into ignorance and obscurity: and, active and intelligent as they naturally are,
 “they continued, whilst other nations were eager in the
 “pursuit of knowledge, in a state of languor and stupefaction. This, however, must be imputed to the un-
 “happiness

“happinefs of their political fituation; not to any defect
“of genius: for no fooner was the one removed in any
“degree than the other began to difplay itfelf.”

Robertfon's History of Scotland.

The author's meaning is that, as foon as the unhappinefs of the political fituation of the Scots was in fome degree removed, their genius began to difplay itfelf. But his words do not imply this: they imply, not that the *genius* of the Scots, but that their *defect of genius*, began to difplay itfelf. For, though the fingle word *genius* may be confidered as oppofed to *political fituation*, it is *defect of genius*, which is oppofed to *unhappinefs of political fituation*: and he tells us that, when the latter was in fome degree removed, the other began to difplay itfelf.

I think I fhould have faid—*This, however, muft be imputed to the unhappinefs of their political fituation; not to any defect of genius: for no fooner was that fituation amended in any degree than their genius began to difplay itfelf.*

CCIX.

THE words *which* and *it* are frequently employed together in fuch a manner as feems to deftroy fenfe.

“Credit no propofition purely becaufe the etymology
“implies it. Etymology is the voice of the people;
“which the philofopher always fufpects, but always attends to it.” *Translation of Michaelis's Difcourfe on the Influence of Opinions on Language, and of Language on Opinions.*

This feems to fay *Etymology is the voice of the people; which the philofopher always fufpects, but which he always attends to it*: for the fenfe of the word *which* is almoft neceffarily brought forward in the mind of the reader to the laft limb of the fentence.

The abfurdity is avoided by omitting the *it*. *Etymology is the voice of the people; which the philofopher always fufpects, but always attends to.* This is faying, *which the philofopher always fufpects, but (which he) always attends to.*

If the word *it* be ufed, there ought to be at leaft a colon, if not a full ftop, at the word *fufpects*; and fome additional words will be neceffary. For inftance; *Etymology*

logy is the voice of the people; which the philosopher always suspects: but, though he always suspects, he always attends to it..

Faults of this sort are very common in our English writers.

CCX.

“THESE Hermapion translated into Greek; part of which is preserved by Ammianus Marcellinus.”

Divine Legation.

This certainly does not make sense, there being no word whereto the relative *which* refers: for the author's meaning is that a part of the translation (not of the originals) is preserved: but, though the act of translating be spoken of, the translation itself is not mentioned. As to the word *Greek*, the *which* cannot refer to that; for *Greek* signifies the Greek language, not the Greek translation. Yet I suspect that the author, through inadvertence, considered it as referring to this word.

He might have said *These Hermapion translated into Greek; and a part of them thus translated is preserved by Ammianus Marcellinus; or, these Hermapion translated into Greek; and a part of the translation is preserved by Ammianus Marcellinus.*

CCXI. *The employing the present and the preter-perfect Tense together in relating a past Transaction.*

“HE accordingly draws out his forces, and offers battle to Hiero, king of Syracuse, who readily accepted it.”

When the writer, for the sake of animating his narration, had thought proper to make use of the present tense for the two first verbs, he ought to have put the other verb in the same tense, likewise. He should therefore have said *He accordingly draws out his forces, and offers battle to Hiero, King of Syracuse, who readily accepts it.*

This is a common fault in our writers, and especially in our poets, who seldom scruple to sacrifice sense, where it stands in the way of rhyme or measure.

It is not a little to be deplored that Virgil, whose style is so very noble, and perhaps is in all other respects unexceptionable,

exceptionable, is everlastingly guilty of the fault I here reprehend. It is a terrible blemish in him.

CCXII.

“**T**HOU art the first that ever has taught the science of “tyranny.” *Duke of Guise to Machiavel, in the Dialogues of the Dead.*

This is the grammatical way of speaking; though some writers would have said *Thou art the first that ever hast taught*, &c. considering the pronoun *that* as relative to *thou*, which is the second person.

Indeed, if I say *thou, who* (or *that*) *hast first taught the science of tyranny*, I speak properly; because here the *who* (or *that*) which is the nominative to the following verb, is really relative to *thou*; and the word *first* is only an adjective agreeing with *who* (or *that*).

But, in the sentence quoted from the Dialogues, *Thou art the first that ever has taught the science of tyranny*, the word *that* is relative to *first*; and *first* is in the third person, it meaning *the first man*, or *the first writer*.

There may, however, be sentences of a similar construction, where a deviation from grammar would not be without its grace.

CCXIII.

“**A**N attempt of this nature would be utterly impracticable.” *Preface to Baker’s Reflections on Learning.*

In the expression of *This design is impracticable* there is no impropriety, because the word *design* signifies not only *intention*, or *purpose*, but likewise a thing *intended* or *purposed*: and it is in this latter sense that it must be understood, when we talk of a *design’s* being impracticable. But *an attempt*, which signifies an *endeavour*, does not, as I apprehend, also signify *a thing endeavoured at*. If it be as I say, the expression of *the attempt is impracticable* must be wrong, unless we consider it as figurative.

CCXIV.

“**I**F any one, who thinks thus of me, will only suspend his censure so long till I draw my conclusion, &c.” *Ibid.*

I

Suspend

Suspend your censure so long that I may draw my conclusion.—Suspend your censure so long as to give me time to draw my conclusion.

These expressions are English, but somewhat languid: and it would be better to say *Suspend your censure till I draw (or till I have drawn) my conclusion.* *So long that,* and *so long as,* are good English. *So long till* is not English.

CCXV. TO BE REVENGED OF.

MANY people (perhaps the greater part) say *to be revenged of an offender.*

I conceive this not to be strictly good English, and that we ought to use the word *on* in speaking of the person who is the object of revenge, and *of,* or *for,* in speaking of the crime, or fault revenged.

For instance, *I will take revenge on that man.—I will be revenged on that man.—I will take revenge of that insult.—I will be revenged of that insult.—I will take revenge for that insult.—I will be revenged for that insult.*

It may be worth while to observe that *on't*, the contraction of *on it*, is frequently used where *on it* would be improper, and where the proper expression would be *of it*; and this even by the correctest speakers, as well as by all the rest of the nation. The reason of this is, without doubt, that the contraction *on't* has a more distinct and pleasing sound than the contraction *of't*. We say, for example, *I am glad on't.—I had never heard on't.* And yet *I am glad on it.—I had never heard on it,* are not English; the proper expressions being *I am glad of it.—I had never heard of it.*

CCXVI.

MR. WARD, late professor of rhetoric at Gresham college, speaking in his grammar of a future-perfect tense, says “It denotes an action as done at some future time.”

“He ought,” says one of the Reviewers, “to have said “It denotes an action as to be done at some future time. “As it stands, it reads somewhat like an Hibernicism.”

The Reviewer appears to me to be mistaken. I see nothing exceptionable in Mr. Ward's expression. Suppose

pose I say to a friend, *I am going to settle in the country; where I intend immediately to build a house.—If you will come down a year hence, you will find it built and furnished.* Here I speak of the house as finished, though at a future period of time: but surely no man will assert there is even the least impropriety in this way of speaking. There is therefore no Hibernicism in saying that a future-perfect tense represents a thing as done at some future time.

Why did not the Reviewer object likewise to Mr. Ward's expression of a *future-perfect tense*? For, if denoting an *action as done at some future time* be an Hibernicism, a *future-perfect tense* must be so.

CCXVII. MUCH LESS.

THESE words, on which I have already made one remark, are sometimes but awkwardly used after the substantive *nothing*.

In his disposition there was nothing harsh, much less cruel

Where the words *much less* are introduced in this way, some other words, in order to make sense, must be supposed. What words ought to be supposed here? The words *any thing*. For instance, *In his disposition there was nothing harsh, much less any thing cruel.*

But, if a man says *In his disposition there was nothing harsh, much less cruel*, does not the word *nothing* present itself again to the hearer's imagination? and does not the speaker seem to say *In his disposition there was nothing harsh, much less nothing cruel*? To my ear he does. But this would make a sense contrary to what he intends. I should think it therefore best to introduce the words *any thing*, as I have done above: *In his disposition there was nothing harsh, much less any thing cruel*; or, *much less was there any thing cruel*.

CCXVIII.

THESE (or *those*) sort of men.—*These* (or *those*) kind of people.

One would think this way of speaking must be insufferable to an ear of any delicacy: yet we have many

approved authors, who take no care to avoid it. In the Divine Legation it occurs frequently.

We have many ungrammatical expressions, which cannot well be avoided, without a stiffness; but that is not the case here. *Men of this sort*, which is a correct expression, is as easy, to the full, as *these sort of men*; and is certainly much less inelegant. But, though any one should chuse to make *men* the genitive, where is the necessity of grossly violating grammar by giving *sort* an adjective plural? and what should hinder him from saying *this sort of men*? in which expression there is nothing exceptionable.

I suspect that what gave rise to the using an adjective plural with *sort*, or *kind*, was the sometimes seeming difficulty, where it is a nominative, in determining whether to make it plural or singular. *This sort of men is ever ready to make professions of service.*—*This sort of men are ever ready to make professions of service.* I may be asked, which of these two ways of speaking is the best, both of them seeming to be exceptionable. In the first, what seems a noun of number is followed by a verb singular: in the last, a noun singular is followed by a verb plural. As for me, I should prefer the first. But I affirm that either of them is much less offensive than *these (or those) sort of men*.

CCXIX.

THE English participle is often converted into a substantive.

For instance, *His acting in that manner was a great piece of rashness.*—*His signing that paper* (or, *his signing of that paper*) *has undone him.* Here *acting* and *signing* are substantives.

There are critics (and the author of the Introduction to English grammar is one) who assert that, where another substantive immediately follows, the preposition *of* is absolutely necessary. They would therefore condemn the expression of *his signing that paper*, and would tell us we ought to say *his signing of that paper*.

Here I cannot agree with them. *His signing that paper* is, as I conceive, much better than *his signing of that paper*; which last expression is, to my ear, insipid.

Though

Though the *form* of the word *signing* be that of a substantive (it having the adjective *his* agreeing with it) the sense of it is that of a verb. The preposition therefore not only is unnecessary, but seems to maim the sense.

The use of the preposition is necessary, as I should imagine, only where the participle thus converted into a substantive has what we may call a *neuter* sense, not an *active* one. For instance, *The dancing of that woman so well at the ball was the ruin of her now husband; for he fell in love with her there, and married her.* Here *the dancing of that woman so well* signifies *that woman's dancing so well*; and *dancing* has what I have called a *neuter* sense.

But, when I say *his signing that paper*, the word *signing* has an *active* sense; as has the verb *to sign*, when we say *to sign a paper*; where *paper* is the accusative case governed by that verb.

There are places, however, where I would use the *of* for the sake of sound, and of smooth pronunciation, though the omission of it might make better sense: and I would rather say *his signing that paper was the undoing of him* than *his signing that paper was the undoing him*; where *undoing* has an *active* sense, as well as *signing*. But I should use the *of*, because *the undoing of him* is more distinct to the ear, and more easy to the organs of speech than *the undoing him*.

That these participles, when taking the form of substantives, still retain the sense of verbs, appears to me so plain as to need no proof. But, if any one be startled at the assertion, let him consider these expressions. *His acting so generously in that affair has gained him great applause.*—*His speaking so clamorously is very offensive*; where these participle-substantives (as I may call them) are used very naturally with adverbs; whereas *his act so generously in that affair*,—*his speech so clamorously*, are nonsense,

CCXX.

“THOUGH the learned writer's arguments be thus defective, yet it is very true what he says; these physicians were indeed an order of the ministers of religion.”

Divine Legation.

It is very true what he says, to signify what he says is very true, is certainly very ungrammatical. Yet, this way of speaking being not only common among the illiterate, but even frequently used by the learned, and having a certain air of ease, it cannot be condemned as bad English.

CCXXI.

“THERE is not now a sovereign state in Europe, but keeps a body of regular troops in their pay.”

Parliamentary Debates.

The pronoun *their*, which refers to *state*, supposes this noun to be a noun of number. But, even granting it to be so (which I can hardly admit), the verbs *is* and *keeps*, both of which are singular, make the pronoun *their*, which is plural, absolutely improper in this place. If a pronoun therefore must be used, it were best to say *There is not now a sovereign state in Europe but keeps a body of regular troops in its pay.*

But the sentence would perhaps be more elegant without any pronoun at all. For instance, *There is not now a sovereign state in Europe but keeps a body of regular troops in pay.*

CCXXII.

“THE reason will be accounted for hereafter.”

Divine Legation.

A reason given for any event is what accounts, or pretends to account, for that event. To say therefore *The reason will be accounted for*, is saying *What accounts for it will be accounted for.*

The proper expression would have been *The reason will be given hereafter*; or, *this will be accounted for hereafter.*

Or, perhaps, the writer uses the expression of *accounting for* in the same sense as a tradesman, who says, *I will account for that sum*, meaning that he will produce it. In this sense it seems allowable.

The cause is (or was) attributed to is an impropriety common in the French language; from whence perhaps we have borrowed it. It is pardonable no otherwise than as being understood figuratively; for the expression is very visibly irregular.

That

That, which produces an event is, the cause of such event. If I therefore say *The cause of his death was attributed to a violent cold that he caught*, it is as though I said *the cause of his death was attributed to what was (probably) the cause of it*; which is utterly absurd.

The proper expression is *His death was attributed to a violent cold that he caught*; or, *the cause of his death was supposed to be a violent cold that he caught*.

CCXXIII.

“THIS explains the meaning of the forty days, which were fulfilled for Israel.” *Ibid.*

Here seems, at first sight, to be an impropriety not unlike those observed in the preceding remark. The word *explains* signifies *shews the meaning of*. Is not therefore *explains the meaning* as much as to say *shews the meaning of the meaning*?

The writer might have said *This is an explanation of the forty days, which were fulfilled for Israel*; or, *this gives us (or shews us, or points out) the meaning of the forty days which were fulfilled for Israel*.

Yet I will not affirm the phrase *to explain a meaning* to be absolutely an impropriety. I think the expression may, in many places, be justified. A man makes me an embarrassed speech, which I do not well comprehend. I say to him, *I have some notion of your meaning; but it is a confused one.—I believe, says a stander-by, I can explain it to you.—That is, I can make clear to you what his meaning is.*

CCXXIV.

THE Divine Legation, explaining a passage in Virgil, says “But an old poem under the name of Orpheus, entitled *A Descent into Hell*, had it been now existing, would, perhaps, have shewn us that no more was meant than Orpheus’s initiation.”

Had such a thing been THEN existing, it would have had such an effect, is a proper way of speaking.—*Had it been NOW existing, it would have had such an effect*, though many people would express themselves in this manner, is hardly sense.

I think

I think the author should have written as follows—*But an old poem under the name of Orpheus, entitled A Descent into Hell, were it now existing, would perhaps shew us that no more is meant than Orpheus's initiation.*

CCXXV. ONE.

WOULD a reasonable person believe it possible for writers to make this word plural, where it means (as it almost always does) an individual? and yet we sometimes find it made so.

“Not one in an hundred,” says a book called *Advice from a Bishop to a Clergyman*, “either read or speak in public with any propriety.”

I am afraid the good bishop himself never spoke with much propriety in regard to his choice of words. What could induce him to say *read and speak*, and not *reads and speaks*? Could he suppose that the word *hundred* was to determine the person of the verbs?

This is a fault not unlike that which I have taken notice of in remark LXX.

There are indeed places where the word *one* ought to be made plural. If I say *Courtiers and anti-courtiers are pretty much alike. The one have no more the interest of the nation at heart than the others*, this is a proper way of speaking, and it would be wrong to say *has the interest*, because *the one* here refers to a substantive (or to substantives) plural.

CCXXVI. ONE OF THEIR, &c.

LET us suppose three houses to belong in common to three men, each man having a share in each house. If one of these houses happen to fall, the expression of *one of their houses is fallen*, or *one of those men's houses is fallen* would, without doubt, be very proper.

But I believe ninety-nine persons in a hundred would make use of the same expression where it would not be proper; or, at least, where it would not be the best way of speaking.

We will suppose a man to be the sole proprietor of one house. If this house should fall, there are few people but what,

what, seeing this man in company with other men, and mentioning the accident, would (as I have hinted above) use the same expression, and say *one of their houses is fallen*, or *one of those men's houses is fallen*.

But this, as I have just now said, would not be the best way of speaking. It would be much better to say *the house of one of those men is fallen*, or *the house of one of them is fallen*: for these words, conveying but one idea, could not be misunderstood; whereas *one of those men's houses is fallen* might be understood to signify that those men had some houses in common, and that one of those houses was fallen down.

CCXXVII. ONLY. NEITHER. EITHER.

THERE are innumerable instances of the wrong placing these words.

Only, by not being in its proper place, gives a sense not intended. *Not only*, *neither*, and *either*, by being out of their places, make nonsense.

"Theism," says my Lord Shaftesbury, "can only be opposed to polytheism or atheism."

He ought to have said *Theism can be opposed only to polytheism or atheism*: for his meaning is that polytheism and atheism are the only things to which theism can be opposed. But his words do not imply this: for *theism can only be opposed to polytheism or atheism* signifies that theism is not capable of any thing, except of being opposed to polytheism or atheism; which is a quite different sense. Besides, it makes a false assertion: for, though it may be true that polytheism and atheism are the only species of belief to which theism can stand in opposition, yet there are many other things, of which theism is capable. It is capable of influencing a man's conduct. It is capable of gaining him the good-will of another in the same, or of exciting the aversion of those in a different, way of thinking. In short, there is no saying of how many things it is capable.

"He was not only an eye-witness of those affairs, but had a great share in them." *Biographical Dictionary.*

"He was neither learned in the languages, nor philosophy." *Ibid.*

The

The proper way of speaking is *He not only was an eye-witness of those affairs, but had a great share in them.* The *not only* ought to precede the *was*, not to follow it.—*He was learned neither in the languages nor in philosophy.* *Learned* ought to precede *neither*.

When we say *He was not only an eye-witness of those affairs, but had a great share in them*, the sense of the word *was*, by this word's being put before the *not only*, is brought forward to the *but had a great share in them*. It is therefore the same as if we said *He was not only an eye-witness of those affairs, but also he was had a great share in them*; which is nonsense.

So likewise in the other sentence, *He was neither learned in the languages, nor philosophy*, by putting *neither* before *learned*, the word *philosophy*, which ought to be opposed only to *the languages*, becomes opposed to *learned in the languages*; whereby we say *He neither was learned in the languages, nor was he philosophy*; which is also nonsense.

I own it astonishes me that our writers should go on from age to age expressing themselves in this slovenly manner, when there is not one instance in ten of the fault's being committed, where it would not have been easy to avoid it. Sometimes indeed there is no avoiding the impropriety without a stiffness or heaviness of expression. In either of these cases it is to be suffered.

“Wherein not only their wants were to be satisfied, but all their appetites and passions to be gratified.”

Lord Bolingbroke.

Here the *not only* is rightly placed. But the same writer in the following sentence has placed it wrong. *They speak not only of the law, but refer to many of the facts related in the Pentateuch.* By putting *speak* before *not only*, he has brought forward the sense of this word *speak* to the latter part of the sentence, and made nonsense: for it is as though he said *They speak not only of the law. They likewise speak refer to many of the facts related in the Pentateuch.*

If a man says *I speak not only of him, but of all his companions*, here the word *speak* is rightly placed before the *not only*, because the *all his companions* stands opposed to the *him*; for which reason the sense of the word *speak* ought to be brought forward to the latter part of the sentence,

tence, the meaning of the speaker being this, *I speak not of him only: I likewise speak of all his companions.*

CCXXVIII.

ONE of the greatest barbarisms in the English tongue, and which it amazes me that scarcely any author avoids, is the using the preter-perfect tense of the infinitive mood where we ought to use the present or future.

I was going to have written him a letter.—I intended to have written to him.—Can there be a greater impropriety than this? Is it not plain we ought to say *I was going to write him a letter.—I intended to write to him.*

When we talk of going to *have done* a thing, or of intending to *have done* it, we speak of the thing's being done, as prior to the setting about it, or intending it.

We have indeed one verb, which claims an indulgence in this particular, and which it is necessary to follow with the preter-perfect tense of the infinitive mood, where it would be proper to follow other verbs with the present or future.

This is the verb *ought* which is irregular, and never varies in its termination. If it were a regular verb, its preter-imperfect and preter-perfect would be *oughted*; and, in that case, if I intended to tell a man that it was his duty upon some past occasion to act otherwise than he did, the proper expression would be *You oughted to act so and so*, and not *You oughted to HAVE ACTED so and so*; for this last expression would contain the same absurdity as those which I have condemned above. Indeed the absurdity is contained in the expression we do use, viz. *You ought to have done it*. But there is no avoiding it, as this verb does not change its termination: for, when we speak in the present tense, we say *You ought to do so and so*; and our using the same expression in a past tense would cause a confusion.

I am not ignorant that the word *ought*, which I may here seem to speak of as an infinitive, was originally the preter-perfect of the verb *to owe*. But it is now never used as such, and has at present a quite different sense.

CCXXIX.

I HAVE *lost this game, though I thought I should have won it.—She was so very ill that all those about her imagined she would have died.—He received a wound, which had almost cost him his life.*

These are the common ways of speaking: but they are wrong. They are barbarisms of the same strain with that taken notice of in the preceding remark.

The proper ways of speaking are *I have lost this game, though I thought I should win it.—She was so very ill that all those about her imagined she would die.—He received a wound, which almost cost him his life.*

CCXXX.

THERE may, it is true, be a case, where the last expression, condemned in the foregoing remark, *He received a wound, which had almost cost him his life*, would, with an additional word or two, not be improper.

For instance, *I saw him lately, and found him in a very weak state: for he had received a wound in a duel about a month before, which had almost cost him his life.*

If the speaker mean that this man's life had been in danger before he (the speaker) saw him, the expression is right; because, though the danger was future to the receiving the wound, it was antecedent to the seeing the duellist in this weak state. But to employ a preter-pluperfect tense, in mentioning a past circumstance, otherwise than as it was antecedent to some other past circumstance spoken of, is an absurdity so egregious, and, as I should imagine, so very obvious, that I can never sufficiently wonder that even our best writers do not avoid it.

CCXXXI.

NOT long before, he asked me what need I had for his "assistance."

Duncan's Translation of Cicero's Oration against Piso.

With the word *occasion* we use the *for*. *There was no occasion for it. But, with need, the of.—Not long before, he asked me what need I had of his assistance.*

The

The Introduction to English Grammar takes notice of many prepositions thus improperly used even by Swift, Addison, Temple, and other writers of the highest reputation: some of them, indeed, with such shameful impropriety as one would think must shock every English ear, and almost induce the reader to suppose the writers to be foreigners.

CCXXXII.

I HAVE observed in another Remark, that the word *only*, by being improperly placed, gives a sense not intended.

This word, and several others, are sometimes placed not absolutely improperly; yet so as for the reader not to know, till he has past them, whether they refer to the words immediately preceding, or to those immediately succeeding them. We ought to have two different marks: one to signify the first; the other, the latter. A reader, then, though he were running over the page ever so fast, could not be deceived, and lay a wrong emphasis.

CCXXXIII. WHOM.

WE often find this word in bad writers, and sometimes even in good ones, in the room of *who*.

Mr. Locke says, in one of his letters to Mr. Molyneux, "If you were here, you would find three or four in the parlour after dinner, whom you would say passed their afternoons as agreeably and as jocundly as any people you have this good while met with."

This is not good English. He ought to have said *who you would say pass their afternoons, &c.* and not *whom*: for the pronoun is not in the accusative case, and governed by the verb *say*: but it is the nominative to the verb *passed*: and *whom* is not a nominative. If the small hiatus there would have been in *who you was* the reason of his avoiding those words, he might have given another turn to the sentence, and have written *of whom you would say that they pass their afternoons*, or *whom you would own to pass their afternoons*.

For the reason of my substituting *pass* in the room of *passed*, see Remarks CCXXVIII. and CCXXIX.

In poetry, where greater liberties in point of style may be taken than in prose, *whom* may, for the sake of sound, be used instead of *who*.

“The king of dikes, than whom no sluice of mud

“With deeper fable blots the silver flood.” *Dunciad*.

To have written strictly good English, the author should have said *than who no sluice of mud*; since the word is in the same case with *sluice*, which is a nominative. But, as there is a force in the word *whom* which there is not in *who*, the using this last word would have enfeebled the sentence, and, in a great measure, have spoiled two of the most beautiful lines in English poetry.

There are likewise places, even in prose, where, for the sake of sound, *whom* may be used in the nominative.

The late Dr. Salter, Master of the Charter-house, on seeing the first edition of my book, where the above made one of the Remarks, inquired of the bookseller the name of the author, and, soon after, wrote to me, desiring me to call on him.

When I saw him, he objected to my observation on Pope's expression of *than whom*. He insisted upon it that *than whom* was always right, and that *than who* was a bad expression.

I heard what he had to say, without being at all convinced. But I find the author of the Introduction to English Grammar, in an edition of his book published since that time, is of the same opinion; though he seems to own the expression to be ungrammatical.

But neither am I yet by any means convinced. There are places, where, in my opinion, *than whom* would be glaringly absurd. For instance, a man says *Virgil is a much greater poet than Lucan*. Another, who did not hear distinctly the word *Lucan*, says *a much greater poet than who?* Surely, this is the proper expression, it signifying *a much greater poet than who is?*—*A much greater poet than whom?* (which would signify *a much greater poet than whom is?*) would be insufferable.

CCXXXIV.

“JUSTICE therefore, as well as gratitude, obliges me to dedicate these papers to your Lordship.” *Dedication of Wotton's Reflections on ancient and modern Learning.*

Here is a fault something similar to that taken notice of in Remark CXIX, but much more gross.

Though the expression of *Justice and gratitude oblige me* would be very proper, *Justice, as well as gratitude, oblige me*—is a great violation of grammar; and a violation that has no grace. The verb ought incontestably to be in the singular number; and the author should have said *Justice, as well as gratitude, obliges me*: for *as well as* can never be considered as having the sense of *and*.

The word *does* is supposed after *gratitude*; and it is as though the author had said, *Justice obliges me to dedicate these papers to your Lordship, as well as gratitude does, or as well as gratitude obliges me to it.*

CCXXXV.

“THEY were wise enough to seem not to understand her meaning.” *Robertson's History of Scotland.*

The expression *to understand a meaning* seems, as well as *to explain a meaning*, taken notice of in Remark CCXXIII, liable to exception.

To understand signifies *to know the meaning of*.—*To understand her meaning* must therefore signify *to know the meaning of her meaning*.

To comprehend or conceive, of which two words the sense appears to me something different from that of *to understand*, would perhaps have been more proper: or, the author might have said *they were wise enough to seem not to understand her*; or, *they were wise enough to seem not to know* (or, *not to be conscious of*) *her meaning*.

CCXXXVI.

THOUGH the verb *to lie down* be neuter, its participle is used as a passive by most of our writers, where the lying down is a self-act, and the person is not laid down by another.

He finds himself ill, and is lain down.—This expression, I own, hurts me; and I should rather say *He finds himself ill, and is laid down.*

Yet the self-act of *rising* is universally expressed by the participle passive, though the verb *to rise* be neuter, as well as *to lie*, or *to lie down*.

He has had a heavy fall: but I see he is risen again.

And why *lain*, used as a passive, should offend me more than *risen*, I should find it, perhaps, no easy matter to tell.

CCXXXVII.

It was observed to me by Dr. Salter that, where a preposition is connected with a verb, so that the two words give but one sense, as in *leave off*, *set off*—*set in*, *set to*, they ought to be joined by a hyphen, as we join two substantives, when the first serves as an adjective to the last; and that we should write *leave-off*, *set-off*, *set-in*, *set-to*.

I am tired, and shall now leave-off.—*Dress sets-off that woman in an extraordinary manner.*—*A strong northerly wind is set-in.* *The combatants are ready, and are going to set-to.*

CCXXXVIII.

“THIS I take to be the period, in which the art of preaching was carried to the highest pitch of beauty it had before, or has ever since, obtained.”

Fordyce on Preaching.

A higher pitch of beauty than it had before, or has ever since, obtained, would have been sense. But the author's expression is not so: for it supposes the period, of which he speaks, to be part of the time that preceded that period; and likewise part of the time that has elapsed since. It is something like Milton's

“Adam, the goodliest man of men since born,

“His sons; the fairest of her daughters Eve;”

Where Adam is spoken of as one of those men who have been born since his time; (or, at least, since his formation) and Eve as one of her own female descendants.

There is the same impropriety in an expression very common among us, but which custom reconciles, viz. *Of all*

all other, or of all others. For instance, *He is of all others the wittiest writer.*

If I say, *A is the wittiest writer that ever was; but B is of all others the wittiest,* I talk sense: for this signifies that B is the wittiest writer that ever was, excepting A, who is wittier. But, if, without having mentioned any other author, I say, *B is of all others the wittiest writer,* I talk nonsense: for this supposes B to be one of those writers, of whom he is *not* one; since, B alone being mentioned, the words *all others* can signify only *all other writers than B.*

Yet custom, as I have said, reconciles this expression. I mean, that it reconciles it to the common run of men, and even to many who are esteemed men of fine parts; but I much question whether it will ever reconcile it to persons of a correct mind.

CCXXXIX.

HAD *like*, and *to be like*, to express the nearness to a contingency, are very awkward and uncouth phrases; and it were to be wished some writer of reputation, whom the rest of the world would not disdain to follow, would invent some other concise and better phrase, to signify the same thing.

These expressions were undoubtedly invented by persons unlettered: and the word *like* was probably intended as an adjective: most certainly not as a verb; in which view it makes no sense at all. Yet the author of the Dialogues of the Dead has considered it as a verb in the following speech of Cosmo de Medicis to Pericles: *Nor did I ever forget and suffer him [Marfilius Ficinus] so to want the necessaries of life as you did Anaxagoras, who had like to have perished by that neglect.*

He should have said either *who had like to perish*, or *who was like to perish*: of which the latter appears to me the better expression. *To be like* is certainly not so remote from sense as *had like*.

CCXL.

WE find even in very tolerable writers the absurd expression of *he enjoyed bad health*.

This is not indeed false grammar, but it is bad sense. *Enjoy* is certainly to be used only where we speak of something desirable and good.

These writers might have said *He suffered bad health—he laboured under bad health—he was afflicted with bad health*.

CCXLI.

IN the preceding Remark, I have used the expression of *afflicted with*, as being the most common. Yet I think *afflicted by* more proper.

He was afflicted by bad health.

This is visibly a more just expression than *afflicted with bad health*.

CCXLII. OTHERGUESS.

THIS is the common way of spelling and pronouncing the word.

The proper way of spelling and pronouncing it is, without doubt, *otherguise*, the word *guise* signifying *fashion, mode, sort*.

CCXLIII. STAND AN END.

THUS people pronounce, and most commonly write.

The proper expression is, *stand on end*. *His hair stands on end*. That is, *the hairs of his head* (as standing upright) *stand on their ends*.

CCXLIV.

I HAVE observed that the *s* is improperly omitted in the third person singular of the present tense of the verb *to dare*.

It is as improperly omitted in that of the verb *to need*, where the verb signifies *to be under a necessity*, or *obligation*.

He

He need not do it is a wrong way of speaking. If we do not use the auxiliary does, we ought to say he needs not do it, or he needs not to do it,

Need is likewise improperly used in the past tenses.

Instead of saying He need not have done it, we ought to say (if we do not use the auxiliary) he needed not do it, or he needed not to do it.

THE END.

~~22~~